

FE Week

FE funds scarce after 2015 – Cable p3



COMMISSIONER ON COLLISION COURSE WITH OFSTED

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Further Education Commissioner Dr David Collins has called for change at Ofsted if it is to “be more useful” after it rated a Midland college’s leadership as outstanding despite a “critical cash position”.

Bournville College was rated as good overall by the education watchdog in May, before Dr Collins was sent in three months later after a Skills Funding Agency notice of concern issued three months before Ofsted went in.

He told FE Week that Ofsted would have been aware of the college’s financial position, but it was nevertheless glowing in its assessment of the Bournville leadership, reporting: “The board has an impressive range of expertise.”

But the commissioner said the board needed new members, specifically with

reference to “financial expertise”.

The governing board has been under the leadership of new chair Alan Birks after former chair Hugh Griffiths stood down in September due to family commitment.

The college principal, Norman Cave, has also gone on leave since the commissioner’s visit and been replaced by Mike Hill, the college’s finance director, as acting principal.

A college spokesperson said the move was unrelated to the commissioner’s findings, but Dr Collins has now turned his focus onto Ofsted as he raised questions about its handling of colleges’ financial information.

Dr Collins told FE Week: “If you look at FEFC inspection reports from the 1990s, they contained some very useful comparative data. They talked about class sizes, the talked about the cost of income spent on various things, turnover.

“As a principal in the 1990s I could pick

up somebody else’s Ofsted report and learn what had gone wrong and I could get indicators of what I needed to do.

“Ofsted reports now do not contain the same amount of useful information and data as they used to, so I can’t tell how many classes were inadequate, what proportion of the teaching was outstanding, what the staff costs were as a percentage of income, what the class sizes were, how their results by level compared with other colleges etc.

“So I think if Ofsted is to be even more useful than it is at the moment, it would be helpful to share that data, which they will know from their inspections.”

Dr Collins had criticised Bournville College’s “undue reliance on an ambitious growth strategy” and “little margin for error in financial projections” at the college.

Mr Hill claimed Ofsted’s view was formed because it did not take college finances into account, a fact acknowledged by Dr Collins

in his report on the college.

Mr Hill said: “Ofsted judged our leadership and management outstanding because they felt that our financial situation did not impact on teaching and learning.”

A spokesperson for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills said: “The FE Commissioner’s report raised concerns about the financial position of the college and made recommendations on the actions that need to be taken to deliver financial recovery.

“The FE Commissioner did not make specific recommendations about individuals in the leadership team at Bournville College.”

No one from Ofsted was available for comment.

See cartoon on page 8

See editor’s comment on page 8

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FE WEEK TEAM

Editor:

Chris Henwood

Head designer:

Nicky Phillips

Designer:

Rob Galt

Sub editor:

Paul Offord

Reporters:

Freddie Whittaker

Rebecca Cooney

Photographer:

Ellis O'Brien

Financials:

Helen Neilly

Victoria Boyle

Sales manager:

Hannah Smith

Sales executive:

Negar Sharifi

Administration:

Frances Ogefero Dell

Contributors:

Richard Atkins

Kathryn Rudd

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Secret Principal

Andrew Morris

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Managing director:

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Learning & Skills Events, Consultancy and Training Ltd

161-165 Greenwich High Road

London SE10 8JA

T: 020 8123 4778

E: news@feweek.co.uk

DELAY WITH FINDING NEW LONDON OLASS PROVIDER

@PAULOFFORD

PAUL.OFFORD@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) quest for a college to take on London's £17m prison education contract is to continue past its December deadline, FE Week can reveal.

Welfare-to-work provider A4e gave three months' notice to the SFA in August that it was terminating its Offender Learning and Skills Service (Olass) contract for a dozen prisons in the Capital.

An SFA spokesperson told FE Week at the time that it was looking to return the contract to a general FE college provider "in good time for handover of responsibility in December".

But an SFA spokesperson said A4e would continue running London prison education until the end of January.

She said: "To ensure no disruption to the education provision in London prisons, while contractual discussions take place, the SFA is agreeing with A4e an extension on its contract until January 31.

"While contractual discussions continue, due to commercial sensitivities we are not able to disclose any further details until the procurement process is complete."

The SFA told FE Week in the summer that the three other providers to have won Olass4 contracts — the Manchester College, Milton Keynes College and Weston College — had been invited to "express an interest" in taking on the A4E work in London.

But Dr Paul Phillips, principal at Weston College which provides prison education in the South West England, said at the time that

he would not be pursuing the contract. A spokesperson for Milton Keynes College, which holds the South Central and East Midlands Olass4 contracts, also said it would "not be pursuing the contract".

The Manchester College, which holds the North East, North West, Kent and Sussex, and Yorkshire and Humberside Olass4 contracts, declined to comment three months ago and did so again on Wednesday (November 19).

An A4e spokesperson said: "I can confirm that we will be continuing as per the SFA has explained."

She previously said, when A4e gave notice of its contract termination, that delivering the service in London had become "extremely challenging due to a number of constraints beyond our control and which could not have been anticipated when the contract was let".

It comes just over a year after Newcastle College Group's Intraining division took on the apprenticeship contract for supermarket giant Morrison from Elmfield, which later went into administration, and nearly two years after West Nottinghamshire College saved more than 100 jobs when it took on apprenticeship providers Pearson in Practice.

Newcastle College struck a similar deal in March 2008 when it acquired Carter and Carter.

Sector welcomes alignment plans for traineeships

FE WEEK REPORTER

NEWS@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Government moves to align traineeship rules for 16 to 18 and 19 to 24-year-olds have been welcomed by the FE and skills sector.

Older trainees with level two qualifications will, from January, be able to enrol on the programme — like 16 to 18-year-olds.

The change follows the government's eight-week consultation on traineeships, which had also considered a new system in which progression into apprenticeships, jobs or further learning was a funding incentive.

But the programme will continue to be funded using the "existing funding systems," it said in the government's consultation response published on Tuesday (November 18), meaning 16 to 18-year-olds remain funded per learner by the Education Funding Agency (EFA) and 19 to 24-year-olds funded per enrolment by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA).

However, Mr Boles said sector responses to the traineeship consultation, which closed on August 14, meant the government favoured an "evolutionary approach" to reform. Progression into further



learning for 19 to 24-year-olds is also to count as an acceptable outcome for workplace funding. With the SFA funding 80 per cent of older traineeships based on learners simply getting to the end of the programme, and the remaining 20 per cent based on outcome, it means that providers could get 100 per cent of funding for the pre-employment scheme despite no job outcome for the learner.

The move means the same funding result as that of 16 to 18-year-old traineeship providers, paid by the EFA, who get 100 per cent of funding based on whether learners get to the end of the programme.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) has previously made its feelings known to the government regarding learner workplace outcomes potentially affecting funding.

Joy Mercer, AoC director of education policy, responding to the government's August consultation launch on FE outcome-based success measures, said: "The government must be careful not to confuse helpful data on which courses can lead to better employment prospects, with expecting colleges to have direct responsibility for job success."

And, responding to the traineeship announcement, Teresa Frith (pictured), senior skills policy manager for the AoC, said:

Eventful first day

The offices of MPs in Westminster were evacuated an iPad belonging to Skills Minister Nick Boles's apprentice triggered a security alert.

It happened after the apprentice, who FE Week will not name, arrived at Portcullis House, the office building connected to Parliament, for his first day on Monday (November 17).

Mr Boles later Tweeted: "An exciting start to my apprentice's first day at Parliament: the whole of Portcullis House evacuated cos of security scare over his iPad!"

Learner views accepted

Learners will be able to tell the Skills Funding Agency what they think of their provider between now and March 29.

The 2014/15 Learner Satisfaction Survey has gone live and the agency is urging providers to get learners involved.

The agency also warned that learners completing at Christmas should fill in the survey in the next month.

Results will be published on the FE Choices, National Careers Service and data.gov.uk websites.

Learners should visit www.ipsos-mori.com/learnersatisfaction to take part.

Skills report out now

The Skills Commission's final report following a nine-month enquiry into UK skills provision has been released.

The report, Still in tune? The skills system and the changing structures of work, came out on Monday (November 17) and warned training in the UK was "growing increasingly out of step with the needs of the modern economy".

It said change was needed "if the UK workforce is to remain competitively skilled".

"Aligning funding and eligibility across the 16 to 24-year-old age range will make it easier for colleges to provide effective traineeships to help more young people into the workplace.

"We are pleased that the government has incorporated further learning in its response."

Association of Employment and Learning Providers chief executive Stewart Segal said: "Many of the additional flexibilities will enable more providers to respond to the needs of the young people on Traineeship programmes. We proposed more flexibility on eligibility especially older trainees with a level 2 and also support the simplification of the funding system for 19+ learners that will enable a more flexible approach to delivering vocational elements of the programme.

We need to discuss the detail of the implementation of these changes but we hope this will encourage focus on traineeships as the main focus on getting young people work."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: "Our research has consistently shown that providers were being forced to turn significant numbers of young people — aged 19 to 24 — away from a traineeship because they had previously achieved a full level two qualification."

See page 19 for an expert piece from the 157 Group

Cable warns principals of bleak funding future

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Money for FE "will be scarce" no matter who wins the general election, Business Secretary Vince Cable has warned.

In a bleak speech which sounded at times like his farewell message to the sector ahead of what is expected to be a punishing election for his party, the senior Liberal Democrat told the Association of Colleges (AoC) annual conference in Birmingham that further cuts to public spending will hit FE hard.

He said: "Whoever is in government next, any party, any combination of parties is going to grappling with this issue. Money will be scarce. I am not going to pretend otherwise, it is not going to be easy.

"Predominantly, the burden of deficit reduction has fallen on public spending. It's something in the order of 20 per cent of the burden has fallen on tax and 80 per cent on public spending. I personally don't think that's sustainable. I have been making the case for high tax relative to public spending. That is not a fashionable view. It's not a popular view. But I will continue to make it."

Speaking to FE Week after his speech, he said his record in defending the sector was the only reassurance he could offer colleges worried about their futures.



He said: "The reassurance I can give them is my own record. I came into office faced with demands to cut FE by 40 per cent, and I totally rejected it.

"But I have warned principals that if the next government, whoever it is, presses ahead with deficit reduction based on spending cuts rather than tax or a sensible mixture it's going to be very tough. The current system is already quite painful, we're only just over halfway through it."

But in a move which will be welcomed by colleges, Dr Cable indicated that a

decision on whether or not to scrap proposed mandatory employer cash contributions for apprenticeships would be announced soon.

He said: "I can't give an absolute commitment that it will [go ahead]. We are aware of the criticisms and we are trying to respond to them, and I would hope that certainly well before the election there is

some clarity about this." Representatives of the Conservatives and Labour Party also offered no words of comfort to colleges at the conference, with both Skills Minister Nick Boles and his shadow Liam Byrne unwilling to make specific promises about funding post-2015 when asked by FE Week.

Mr Byrne said Labour saws skills funding as "one of those areas which should get devolved to city regions" and admitted he "just doesn't know what the numbers are going to look like".

"I will go into those spending review sessions with every skill I acquired as Chief Secretary to the Treasury in the last Labour government and determined to deliver a growth agenda for FE," he said.

Mr Boles said: "The idea that we as a government are going to cut FE off at the knees, having already demanded quite substantial economies, there is no basis for that. But I can't make any further commitment because I'm not the chancellor and we haven't had the election yet."



Have you read the FE Week Readers' Manifesto?

Why not get involved and join the debate at #FEweekmanifesto

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AoC launches 10-point manifesto for general election

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The Association of Colleges (AoC) has launched a manifesto setting out key issues affecting FE that it wants the next government to take on board.

President Richard Atkins spelled out the document's 10 key demands (set out below) to delegates at the AoC's annual conference in Birmingham on Wednesday (November 19).

He called on colleges to use the manifesto to raise the issues with their local parliamentary candidates in the build-up to the general election.

Mr Atkins said: "As a colleges sector, we demonstrated our unity and our strength when we lobbied against the unexpected and inevitable 18+ funding cut last December.

"Between now and May 7 next year, we need to argue our case, on behalf of our students and staff, with the same urgency and energy."

The manifesto tackled a number of thorny issues including careers advice for 11 to 18 year-olds and called for a new careers hub between schools, colleges and universities.

The document stated: "We have expressed our concern about recent policy decisions, particularly placing a duty on schools to secure careers advice for their pupils, but with no funding attached.

"The next government needs to work with schools and colleges to reintroduce systematic careers education into the curriculum."

It also called for funding cuts to be stopped for 16 to 18-year-old education.

The document stated: "There should be no further cuts to spending on 16 to 18-year-olds and, immediately on taking office, the next government should bring this age group within the protective ringfence.

"By the end of the first year of the next parliament, a once in a generation review should be conducted setting out how much is required to adequately educate or train children and young people.

"The results of this review should

be implemented by the end of the next Parliament in 2020 at the latest."

The manifesto also called for reform to the the government's flagship traineeships.

It said colleges were finding it difficult to convince employers to take on trainees through the scheme introduced in September, aimed at 16 to 24-year-olds, while the number of 16 to 18-year-olds apprentices had declined.

The document stated: "This is because in most sectors businesses are reticent about employing an apprentice this young.

"To address this increasing concern, traineeships should be converted into pre-apprenticeship training, specifically created to prepare 16 and 17-year-olds for a full apprenticeship.

"This training should last two years, be set at level two and include the soft skills so desperately needed by employers."

Visit www.aoc.co.uk to download the full manifesto



George Trow,
Principal of
Doncaster
College and
University
Centre

"This manifesto clearly sets out the next phase for our work with learners and employers. One of the big key planks to this is the independent advice and guidance, which is something we're all keen to have. Funding is a very difficult issue. It's up to us to be as entrepreneurial as we can to create funding. We're blessed we have Ed Miliband, Rosie Winterton and Caroline Flint as our local MPs and they are supportive, so we are in direct contact about these issues."



Sue Higginson,
Principal of
Wirral
Metropolitan
College

"The manifesto priorities are rooted in the focus of the sector and the issues the sector is facing, with a large spoonful of common sense blended in. Sometimes, in times of change, it's easy to forget that whether it's funding or whatever is in that manifesto, there is one common denominator, and that is the student. So starting with good quality advice and guidance which leads to real careers and understanding the role FE plays in that is really important."



Mark Brickley,
Principal of
Kensington and
Chelsea College

"The main themes are all things that have been raised again and again. Whatever government gets in after the election should really listen to the sector and respond to what we have to say. I have been coming to the AoC conference for 14 years and seen ministers make same pledges to support FE every year. Nick Boles said this year that FE is crucial to the future success of the country. As the manifesto said he should invest in us."



Verity Hancock,
Principal of
Leicester College

"The manifesto is pragmatic and sensible rather than visionary and exciting, but that reflects the [financially] constrained times. Leicester College has a large SFA allocation, but we face a big challenge with educating adults with diminishing funding while demand is not going down. Education accounts for people over 19 is an excellent idea as we struggle to explain to people how adult funding works, it's sometimes subsidised or should they take out a loan for example. This would simplify things."



David Carter,
Chair of
governors at
Carlisle College

"Publishing a manifesto is a damn good idea, as setting the FE agenda is an important role for the AoC. It is very important that schools pick up on careers advice. There seems to be a consensus with all politicians that austerity is the only way forward, but I happen to disagree and think more spending cuts would be wrong. We can't deliver more with less, the quality of our services will be affected in the end."



**Allan Stewart
OBE,**
Principal of
Selby College

"I think the AoC has got it spot on with the main points. As a rural college, student transport is a huge issue for us. We have to subsidise a lot of our students' travel costs which is getting more expensive because local authorities are increasingly cutting local bus services meaning we have to lay on our own transport. Career guidance is also not up to scratch. We are getting more and more young people arriving at college without a clue what we do."

Here are the AoC's manifesto demands:

1. The next Government should introduce systematic careers education for 11 to 18-year-olds and facilitate a careers hub between schools, colleges and universities in each area, led by the local enterprise partnership
2. All adult students, whether studying at university or college, should have equivalent access to grants and loans via new education accounts. The Government, the student and their employer should contribute to this account
3. Transport legislation has not caught up with the fact that everyone is now required to participate in education and training until their 18th birthday. The transport rights for 16 to 18-year-olds in education

should mirror those which apply to school children

4. The next Government should reform the higher education system to ensure it can respond quickly in training the engineers, technicians and professionals of the future. FE colleges should be given the power to award higher technical and professional certificates, in partnership with employers

5. The next Government should reform the higher education system to ensure it can respond quickly in training the engineers, technicians and professionals of the future. FE colleges should be given the power to award higher technical and professional certificates, in partnership with employers

6. The way students are assessed in school and college should reflect the fact that we learn in the workplace and at university incrementally, not solely through end of year exams. The next Government should maintain AS Levels in their current form and should allow for rigorous modular assessment in vocational and academic qualifications, alongside final exams

7. The next Government should continue to allow colleges the freedom and flexibility to respond to the needs of their community and local businesses, rather than setting rules from Whitehall

8. To enable colleges and schools to meet the OECD challenge, the next Government

should develop new English and maths qualifications which allow students, aged 16 to 19 and adults to gain the skills that businesses need

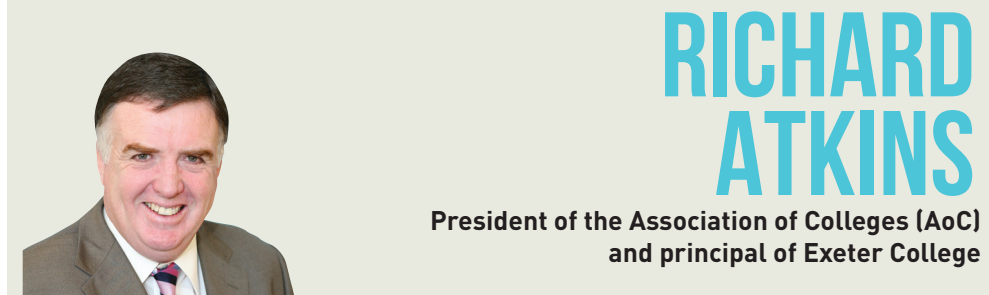
9. There should be no further funding cuts to the education of 16 to 18-year-olds and they should be brought within the Government's protective ringfence. The next Government needs to conduct a once in a generation review of how money is spent at each stage of compulsory education to ensure the budget is used most effectively

10. New schools should only be approved where there is genuine local demand because of poor quality provision and/or rising pupil numbers



Maggie Galliers CBE,
Chair of
governors at
City College
Coventry

"I think it's really well grounded set of proposals that deserve to gain traction and I hope the sector really pulls together to encourage politicians to take notice ahead of the election. Careers advice has never been more important given the greater range of options open to young people through our sector. It is important that people have good guidance on this throughout their lives so they can make the right career changes and get the right training."about these issues."



RICHARD ATKINS
President of the Association of Colleges (AoC)
and principal of Exeter College

The pre-general election AoC manifesto makes a number of requests to the next Government. Richard Atkins outlines the key points and underlying message.

With just six months to go to the General Election, this period of time is crucial for general FE and sixth form colleges.

The AoC has set out its stall of recommendations for the next Government in its manifesto for colleges.

We hope future ministers will take FE seriously, and make decisions that help, rather than hinder colleges and

their students.

Our priorities are simple — supporting student choice; sustaining economic recovery through education and training; and creating a fair and effective education system.

Fairness is the name of the game. It is simply not right that the budget available for a student aged 16 to 18 is so much lower than a school pupil. It's the first step on the road to a future career or to university.

Education policy has moved on, young people must stay in education or training until they are 18, but the system

hasn't caught up. Therefore the post-2015 Government should carry out a once-in-a-generation review of the way education is funded to help make spending fair across all age groups.

Pupils at school are supported to travel to and from school, but once they leave school and attend college, a whole new set of less favourable rules apply. The rules need updating to ensure that local authorities carry out a full assessment of 16 to 18 students' travel needs.

Young people should choose where they want to study based on the course they want to do, rather than the distance from home.

Poor careers advice means young people are often not aware of the best option to choose and are, instead, urged to stay in school to study A-levels when that isn't necessarily appropriate.

We're campaigning for a careers hub in every local area, managed by local enterprise partnerships (Leps) and

supported by schools, colleges, universities, Jobcentre Plus and local authorities, to make sure the advice is impartial and young people

A big chunk of what we're asking for comes back to funding. We make no apology for this

(and adults) have access to all the options available.

Business leaders keep telling us that there aren't enough skilled workers for the jobs available and colleges take this very seriously. They already provide support with apprenticeships, but we need to make sure

the Government doesn't focus on them as the magic pill.

In AoC's recent member survey about their relationship with employers, 80 per cent said it was difficult to get employers to take young people on traineeships and 36 per cent said the same about apprenticeships. Some young people aren't ready to take an apprenticeship. Instead, we need a pre-apprenticeship scheme which adequately prepares people for the workplace.

The Government's requirement that all young people aged 16 to 18 continue studying maths and English is absolutely right, and colleges support this.

But we are clear that it is not in all students' best interests to be required to re-take the same GCSEs that they took at school over and over again. For many students, Functional Skills are appropriate and successful. For others, colleges need to assess the ability and potential of each student before guiding them to a GCSE re-

sit, or to an alternative post-16 English or maths qualification.

Therefore, the next Government should work with businesses, large public sector employers such as the NHS and local councils, and colleges to develop new maths and English qualifications, which are rigorous and related to the world of work.

A big chunk of what we're asking for comes back to funding. We make no apology for this. We say to government — stop singling out 16 to 18 students for all your cuts to the education budget. The AoC Manifesto offers solutions.

If we want to prepare our young people to work in a global economy in which skills are at a premium, we must argue clearly and consistently that the next Government takes on board these recommendations so that England develops the best technical and professional education system among all of the countries within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

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FE WEEK COMMENT

Look in the books

Ofsted is not immune to criticism. But with FE Commissioner Dr David Collins’s comments on the education watchdog’s handling – or lack thereof – of college financial information, you’ve got to hope it’s not immune to change also.

It is hard to believe that an organisation can one month be assessed as inadequate for financial health by the Skills Funding Agency and soon after be commended by Ofsted for outstanding leadership and management.

Then, months later, the commissioner is ordered in by the Skills Minister and we learn of a series of concerns around governance, leadership and financial position.

As the commissioner highlights – ‘ It should be noted that Ofsted does not take into account in their judgments a college’s financial performance or how it is managed or monitored.’

Bournville College’s finances were not healthy. We know that. The commissioner said so.

If it had gone to the wall, would you consider the leadership as having been outstanding? Quite simply you wouldn’t. Nobody would.

In a period when the sector is facing financial constraints, it would seem logical that Ofsted should take in to account financial management and performance.

Scenarios such as this do little to reaffirm faith in the judgements that Ofsted makes.

Chris Henwood
chris.henwood@feweek.co.uk

TOP AOC CONFERENCE TWEETS

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@AoC_info #aocce14 V powerful messages from new @bisgovuk FE commissioner David Collins that reflect his new report

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“Pale, male and stale” a Chair describing his Governing body to David Collins FE Commissioner #aocce14

@caulfieldr
FE Commissioner pointing out need for good strong governance in FE #aocce14

@daveyw73
‘First of all, you need a good Governing Body’ Dr David Collins, #FE commissioner #aocce14 @AoC_info

@ConroyChristina
Dr David Collins says the gap between best and those that struggle is very wide #aocce14



Commissioner in FE funding support call

The government should look at shifting schools funding to colleges as they struggle to cope with more learners re-sitting GCSE maths and English, according to FE Commissioner Dr David Collins.

Dr Collins, who took up post in November last year, received a round of applause for his comments at the Association of Colleges (AoC) annual conference in Birmingham on Tuesday (November 18).

He spoke out in response to changes introduced by the government from September that mean learners who didn’t reach C grade maths and English GCSEs at school must carry on studying the subjects in FE.

Dr Collins said: “If you want success at GCSEs from colleges, two things have to happen — you could actually move money from schools to colleges to support them.

“The second thing is you probably need a different sort of GCSE for people coming to college, something like GCSE business maths or business English is going to be much more useful to both the individual and the employer.”

His comments came just days after

publication of his first annual report, in which he presented a worrying financial outlook for the sector, warning colleges struggling to make ends meet against abandoning expensive subjects such as science and engineering.

“It would be foolish to pretend that the FE sector does not have a difficult time ahead,” Dr Collins wrote in his report.

“Reductions in public spending will necessarily continue for the foreseeable future and the demands for highly skilled individuals to service a growing economy will increase.

“When resources are short it is all the more important that colleges and institutions work together to ensure that those resources are best used for the benefit of learners and employers.

“This will mean some consolidation and indeed some specialisation, as well as neighbouring colleges, institutions and providers considering joint plans for their respective communities.

“There is a danger that without such a consideration the more expensive areas of the curriculum (for example, science and

engineering) will disappear from areas where they are needed in a college’s pursuit of financial stability.”

Martin Doel, AoC chief executive, said: “The commissioner is right to warn of the impact spending cuts are having in narrowing colleges’ curriculum and to raise a concern that more expensive courses, such as engineering, may not be sustainable in the future.”

He also spoke to FE Week after his speech at the conference and issued further warning to colleges in pursuit of alternative revenue streams in addition to teaching “local learners”.

“The focus of colleges should be for the local learners and local employers,” he said.

“That’s their job and they’ve got to get that bit right first, and that means getting the cost of the income right for that.

“Then if they want to go and make money somewhere, that’s fine, as it will support local learners and what happens in their community.

“But many of these ventures are not really undertaken on the basis of careful cost-benefit analysis.”

COMMENTS

Don't abandon expensive subjects to balance books,' FE Commissioner warns

I think it's worth reading David Collins' cautionary words about the prospects for more expensive subjects areas in the light of the current enthusiasm to devolve skills budgets in England to LEPs. In general terms there's a good deal to be said for that policy, but we need to safeguard against the risk that LEPs may prioritise their spending and investment in such a way that the more expensive practical subjects David Collins points to may lose out.

Iain Mackinnon

SFA apprentice chief tells lords of employer worries

This will end up as another huge U turn a few years down the road when recruitment is decimated by the reforms, and/or when Ofsted go in to inspect the quality and/or after the first few scandals due to large scale misappropriation of public funds. Another initiative that is “doomed to succeed” to add to the graveyard of ones that went before. Do we never learn?

We deliver apprenticeships extremely well and with highly satisfied employers. Otherwise we would not be winning the new contracts and the repeat business that we are.

Karen

CORRECTION

Coverage last week on the National Apprenticeship Awards incorrectly stated that large employer of the year was housing developer Barratt Development.

Barratt was actually the macro employer winner and MBDA UK won the large employer prize. The piece also incorrectly referred to hovercraft designers Griffon Hoverwork, which was medium employer of the year, as Griffon Hoverwork. FE Week would like to apologise for any confusion.

Meanwhile, our Skills Show 2014 supplement with this newspaper incorrectly states that Coleg Cambria learners claimed two bronze medals, when they actually won three to record a points total of 23, not 21. The error was contained in information supplied to FE Week.

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Two independent learning providers (ILPs), one offering IT and accountancy apprenticeships and the other training the nation's future tennis stars, have won outstanding praise from Ofsted.

Both Aspire, Achieve, Advance (3aaa) and the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA) were served grade one results in all headline fields.

Ofsted said the 780 apprentices at 3aaa, which has its headquarters in Derby, "make excellent progress which leads to high success rates, outstanding contributions and early positions of responsibility in the work place, and sustainable employment".

"Apprentices learn well in a highly motivational environment, benefitting from

excellent teaching and a strong support culture," the report said.

The inspection, which took place between October 20 and 24, was 3aaa's first since it was founded in 2008.

Co-founder Peter Marples said he was "absolutely delighted" by the grade. "This is indeed a reflection of the sheer dedication, hard work and commitment of everyone — staff, employers and partners," he said.

Co-founder Di McEvoy-Robinson, said: "We have worked exceptionally hard to understand the needs of employers at a local level and fit those needs, so to be recognised by Ofsted for this is such an achievement."

The LTA's tennis coaching apprenticeship provision for 16 to 18-year-olds was inspected between October 6 and 10.

The report on the 239-learner organisation,

which previously had a good grade, found "learners make exceptional progress in improving their playing and coaching skills and are very well prepared for their future careers as players or coaches".

Inspectors visiting the London-based ILP also noted managers ensured the apprenticeships "meet the needs of British tennis outstandingly well". They were the third and fourth outstanding ILP reports published this academic year, after reports on SW Durham Training in August and The Military Preparation College the following month. They were also the eighth and ninth ILPs to be judged outstanding under the current common inspection framework, introduced in September 2012.

No one from the LTA was available for comment.

Engage with colleges Wilshaw tells employers

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REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Ofsted boss Sir Michael Wilshaw (pictured) has challenged employers to engage more with colleges in an effort to bridge the skills gap.

The education watchdog chief inspector said businesses should consider apprenticeships as the answer to their vacancies problems.

Speaking to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI)'s East of England education conference in Cambridge on Tuesday (November 19), he said: "The economy is improving, jobs are more plentiful, and there is cross-party agreement on the need for more high-quality apprenticeships."

But, he said: "Vocational education is still failing to deliver the needs of both young people and of society. There are currently 146,000 job vacancies that employers cannot fill because applicants don't have the required skills."

He further issued a series of challenges to employers, saying: "Have you made a sustained effort to engage with schools and colleges and let them know what opportunities you offer? What would it take to turn a job vacancy into an apprenticeship?"

He added: "It's easy to bemoan the lack of qualified youngsters, but what are you doing to help solve that problem?"

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of

Colleges, said: "Colleges already work with an average of 700 employers in their local area but they are keen to do more.

"Sir Michael is absolutely right to call for more involvement from employers and we hope to see more engagement over coming months and years.

"Employers create apprenticeships and they must be involved in their development for them to be successful.

"However, young people need to be aware of the options open to them. Only a step change in the careers advice available to them will lead to more becoming apprentices.

"That's why our Careers Guidance Guaranteed campaign calls for the establishment of careers hubs in every local area involving schools, colleges, local councils and others."

Sir Michael said "a fundamental shift" in educational structures was needed, praising schools and colleges who had come together in "clusters". "That trend to federation should be encouraged," he said.

At least one school in a cluster should offer vocational provision to 14-year-olds, such as a specialist college or University Technical College, he said.

"Young people could then transfer across institutions in the cluster to provide a route to high-level academic or vocational study," he said. This would mean they "would not

be stuck in one route".

Sir Michael said the UK had "been stuck on the same policy roundabout year after year without any clear idea of which direction to take".

To solve this, he laid out a number of steps to transform vocational education, and to help it match up to schemes abroad.

"Apprenticeships must have parity of esteem with A-levels," he said.

"They must be sold aggressively to schools, parents and young people."

Vocational education "should be seen as a valid option for every student and not as the consolation prize for those who cannot do anything else," he added.

He also said vocational training must give a clear line of sight to work and employer engagement should be at the forefront of any reform.

Neil Carberry (pictured), CBI director for employment and skills policy, said: "Businesses support schools and colleges in many different ways, but can do more. We know that the more interactions young people have with the workplace, the better prepared they are for life outside school and college.

"We want all businesses to increase their engagement with schools, but this cannot just be laid at the door of firms alone. The government must do more and start by reintroducing work experience for Years 10 and 11."

Staff vote in favour of strike



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REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Staff at Lambeth College have voted in favour of a new walkout over employment contracts — just six months after launching an indefinite strike only to return to work just before the summer holidays.

The possible action by members of the University and College Union (UCU) includes another indefinite strike, a one-day strike or a series of escalating strikes, said a UCU spokesperson.

No date has yet been set for the strike, although the UCU said it would announce its plans "in the coming days".

Union members claim contracts for new staff, introduced by the college in April will leave them with longer working hours, less annual leave and less sick pay.

A strike ballot which opened on September 22 was shelved in early October while the union considered an "improved offer" from the college, where existing staff would stay on the original contract until September 2017, or accept a £1,500 "cash incentive" to transfer to the new contract.

In the latest ballot, 66 UCU members to strike, of a turnout of 80 members, which has a total of 250 teaching staff.

Principal Mark Silverman (pictured), who came to the college two years ago tasked with improving the college's financial sustainability after it was hit with an Ofsted grade four inspection result, said the new contracts were necessary.

"The unwillingness of UCU to accept that the new contract is for new staff only, and to acknowledge that it still offers new staff better terms and conditions than they could expect to receive elsewhere in the sector, is almost beyond belief," he said.

"Improvements at the college over the last two years are evident, but we remain in financial recovery and await an Ofsted inspection.

"I call on UCU to acknowledge that to take strike action when only a quarter of our teaching staff support it is reckless, and that irresponsible and unmerited strike action will achieve nothing, other than to undermine those improvements and jeopardise the future of the college."

A UCU spokesperson said: "We want to resolve this matter as quickly as possible and are ready to negotiate with the college leaders, but the support for renewed action must serve as a wake-up call to the college.

"It is clear that staff remain strongly opposed to the current proposals, and any attempts to railroad them through will meet strong resistance."

NEWS

Sector stumps up £11k for charity at conference auction

More than £11,000 was raised for the Helena Kennedy Foundation at the FE Week annual charity auction.

The great and the good from the world of FE were at Birmingham's Hyatt Hotel on day one of the Association of Colleges (AoC) conference for a three-course meal, raffle and entertainment from Croydon College, Stafford College and Birmingham Ormiston's Academy.

A 130-strong guest list also saw items auctioned including a private helicopter flight, which sold for £625, and an aerobically flying session that raised £800.

Martin Doel, AoC chief executive, was

presented with an ambassador's bowl by foundation chair Lady Kennedy. Former FE Week editor Nick Linford, now editor of Academies Week, received the honour last year.

Baroness Kennedy said: "The FE sector is truly where my heart is and it is wonderful that everyone pulled together to raise £11,000."

The evening, sponsored by Tribal and NCFE, provided a brief respite from producing the AoC conference edition of the newspaper from a room on the 22nd floor of the Hyatt Hotel.



Boles in FE loans expansion hint in digital skills hearing

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REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Skills Minister Nick Boles has hinted that the FE loans system was heading for expansion — as the sector awaits results of the government's FE loans consultation.

Mr Boles told the House of Lords Digital Skills Committee on Tuesday (November 18) the government was "moving towards" making adult learner loans, currently offered to those over the age of 23 to complete a course at level three or above, more widely available.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills has not yet published the results of its Future development of loans in further education consultation, which ran from June 19 until August 21, which proposed extending loans to cover some 19 to 23-year-olds and level two qualifications.

Mr Boles told the committee: "If you already have received a qualification of some kind, and you want to update or refresh your skills then we want to make it as easy as possible for you to take out your loan to fund your further learning."

Committee member Lord Lucas said previous witnesses before the committee had called for "up-to-date industry standard, short, funded courses", so those who had taken a career break or wanted to change

ETF reviews maths and English

@PAULOFFORD
PAUL.OFFORD@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The Education and Training Foundation (ETF) is to review teaching and accreditation of maths and English for learners unable to reach D grade GCSE.

It comes as learners who record a D in English and maths at GCSE will, from next year, have to retake in pursuit of an improved grade, while those who get an E or below can try alternative qualifications in the hope of getting a C grade equivalent.

The ETF will not be reviewing GCSEs, rather, their alternatives, including Functional Skills — already the subject of an Ofqual review. Skills Minister Nick Boles told delegates at the Association of Colleges (AoC) conference on Tuesday (November 18): "I have asked the ETF... to work with employers, colleges and awarding bodies to understand what kind of English and maths qualifications might give those who are not able to pass GCSEs a certificate of real value — something that is emphatically not a soft option, something practical and relevant but demanding."

An ETF spokesperson said: "There are ways for people to improve their English and maths skills outside of GCSEs and learners and employees following these routes deserve the very best provision which leads to a qualification employers recognise and respect. That is why we welcome Mr Boles's announcement there will be a review of the best way to achieve and accredit maths and

English skills." She added it would produce preliminary recommendations by the spring..

Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges, said: "It is encouraging that there will be a review of the best way to achieve and accredit maths and English skills. A more appropriate qualification should be developed which is understood, recognised and valued by both young people and employers."

Stewart Segal, chief executive of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers, said: "We should recognise the growing acceptance of Functional Skills with employers, while still aiming for continuous improvement and long-term certainty around the requirements."

David Hughes, chief executive of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, said: "It's vital the skills system works closely with employers to design English and maths qualifications they value and recognise. But we also need to involve learners in that process."

He added: "It is great news that the Minister has recognised their value and that he wants to raise the profile of maths and English qualifications other than GCSEs. Our work has shown adults are most readily motivated back into learning when the curriculum is relevant to their lives and work. We know that some of the Functional Skills delivery does that well and that we can learn from some of the employers, including the Army, who have used Functional Skills to rapidly help improve people's skills."

Colleges should lead skills gap charge

@FCDWHITTAKER
FWHITTAKER@FEWEEK.CO.UK

Colleges need to “face up to their responsibilities” and make FE the sector one that “gets people into work,” a principal has said.

Laurence Vincent (pictured), chair of The Mindset Group and principal of Bournemouth and Poole College, outlined his “brave new vision” for the role of colleges in terms of learner employability as he spoke to FE Week about a new position paper on the subject.

The paper, Employability in UK Colleges: the uncomfortable truth, has been published by Mindset, a group of FE colleges partnered with Reed NCFE, along with a toolkit for colleges.

The paper sets out how colleges are missing an opportunity to lead a charge to fill the growing skills gap, and in an exclusive interview with FE Week at the Association of Colleges annual conference in Birmingham, Mr Vincent spoke of his ambitions for the project.

He said: “I think to a point, colleges are not quite facing up to their responsibilities in some respects, but also, what a fantastic

opportunity this is. I know it seems like an odd thing to say, but I think when it comes to student employability, I think the expectations of colleges have been too low really. I know that’s odd in this era of over-regulation and over-inspection, but I think expectations have been too low.

“I think now expectations are increasing, and colleges are expected to do more in terms of student employability, the sector can go two ways. They could be intimidated by it and think of it in terms of more student outcomes and more pressure on colleges, or they can think of it as a fantastic opportunity to uniquely place themselves as the sector that

gets young people into work.”

He denied his suggestions conflicted with the view of FE Commissioner Dr David Collins, who has warned that principals should not be distracted by ventures too far beyond the running of their colleges.

He said: “What I’m advocating here is part of the core business of the college. I am not advocating principals going off and spending all of their time on follies. I am saying what’s good for the local economy is good for the college, and those links and partnerships with business are going to be crucial for a modern college.”

Visit www.themindset.org.uk

Beacons of the sector

Fourteen FE colleges were winners at the Beacon Awards,

They were announced at the Association of Colleges (AoC) conference in Birmingham.

Among the winners were Leeds City College, whose employer engagement initiative has to almost 11,000 apprenticeships, and South Devon College, whose health programme saw an 80 per cent increase in learner and staff exercise.

The award for continued engagement in education and/or training for 16 to 19-year-old learners went to East Kent College, while the award for outstanding leadership of improvement was won by National Star College. The staff development award went to Kirklees College, while Bridgend College won the award for practical teaching and practical learning.

The prizes for transformational leadership by governing bodies and for improvement in teaching and learning through peer coaching were scooped by Abingdon and Witney College, while Heart of Worcestershire College was recognized for its effective use of technology in FE and skills.

Bridgwater College took the prize for inclusive learning for high needs students while Canterbury College won the award for student services.

Forth Valley College got the award for innovation, while Weymouth College won two prizes, one for its careers education and guidance and the second for sport in the curriculum.

Thinktank calls for policy road map for digital techonology

@REBECCAACOONEY
REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

The FE sector needs a “policy roadmap” to ensure best use of digital technology, a report launched last week has said.

The report, by think tank The Education Foundation and entitled Digital colleges: the journey so far, examined digital best practice in the college sector and what a digital future would look like. It called for FE and policy leaders to “move past the ‘bright lights of tech’” and move towards creating “digital colleges” — “embracing a mindset that utilises digital technology and engagement across its organisation”.

The report looks at the Digital Colleges Programme, which was set up in June to highlight good practice, and share it across the sector.

The authors, Education Foundation co-founder Ian Fordham and associate director Nathan Martin, said there was “no simple recipe for digital transforming institutions or the sector” but called for “a set of clear sector-wide owned definitions of a Digital College and understandings, shared and agreed by principals and senior leaders.”

They also identified five elements for a college seeking to use technology more effectively, including leadership from the front by principals, good infrastructure where technology interacts and integrates

well and aiming to be “digital by default”.

The list also included a warning for providers to be ready for the requirement for at least 10 per cent of a course to be delivered online as set out by the Further Education Learning Technology Action group in March and said leadership should have “agility and adaptability” and an “entrepreneurial approach”.

Robin Ghurbhurun, principal and chief executive of Richmond upon Thames College, which was highlighted for its good practice in the report, welcomed its publication.

“Its focus is not on a new paradigm or promise, but on pragmatism, for far too long the digital box has been empty and the challenge for college leaders is to fill it with purpose,” he said.

South Staffordshire College and North Hertfordshire College were also praised for their digital infrastructures in the report.

South Staffordshire College principal Graham Morley said: “We are committed to pioneering new ways of enabling our communities to exploit the opportunities of living in a digital world. The work of the Digital Colleges programme and report is about facilitating this transformation and influencing thinking. It is enriching the debate as we move forward in the digital age.”

See page 21 for an expert piece by Ian Fordham

Lambeth Adult Learning 4-Year Framework 2015-2019



Lambeth Council is proud to offer a real opportunity for experienced training providers with a strong track record to offer high quality, innovative and responsive Adult Learning provision within the borough.

The Framework will consist of two separate Lots:

- Adult Learning (Community Learning) non-accredited provision for adults aged 19+.
- Adult Learning (Adult Skills Budget) accredited training provision for adults aged 19+.

The Framework will be awarded for a period of 4 years.

If your organisation is interested in tendering for this opportunity, please register on our e-tendering portal at <https://blambeth.eu-supply.com> and log on to express your interest and complete the Business Questionnaire online.

We will be running a workshop for all potential training providers to explain the commissioning and procurement process. We would strongly encourage any interested organisations to send a representative:

Date: **Tuesday, 25 November 2014**

Time: **3 pm**

Venue: **Lecture Theatre, 2nd floor, International House, 6 Canterbury Crescent, Brixton, SW9 7QE**



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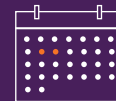
AAC | 2015



FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference and Exhibition 2015

Supporting apprenticeship providers during a time of major reform

DATE:



March 9 to 10, 2015

VENUE:



Venue: Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, Westminster, London

Confirmed Speakers



Jennifer Coupland

Deputy Director, Joint Apprenticeships Unit, Department for business, Innovation and Skills/DfE



Nick Linford

Director of LSECT Ltd, former editor of FE Week



Sue Husband

Director of the National Apprenticeship Service

More speakers to be annouced

The FE Week Annual Apprenticeship Conference and exhibition 2015 (AAC2015) will provide an unprecedented opportunity for those involved with the delivery of apprenticeships to come together to learn, share and debate during a time of major reform and on the eve of a General Election.

Taking place on the first two days of National Apprenticeship Week (March 9 to 10, 2015) and in partnership with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the conference will offer a mixture of key note speeches from Government Ministers and Shadow Cabinet members, to in-depth practical sessions with Nick Linford and other technical specialists.

This is a not to be missed two-day policy and practice conference.

For more information and to register visit **feweekaac2015.co.uk**

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THE LATEST PARLIAMENTARY SKILLS COMMISSION REPORT OUTLINES STRATEGIC ALERTS AHEAD OF THE GENERAL ELECTION



CHARLOTTE BOSWORTH
DIRECTOR OF SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT AT OCR AND SKILLS COMMISSIONER



‘Still in tune?’

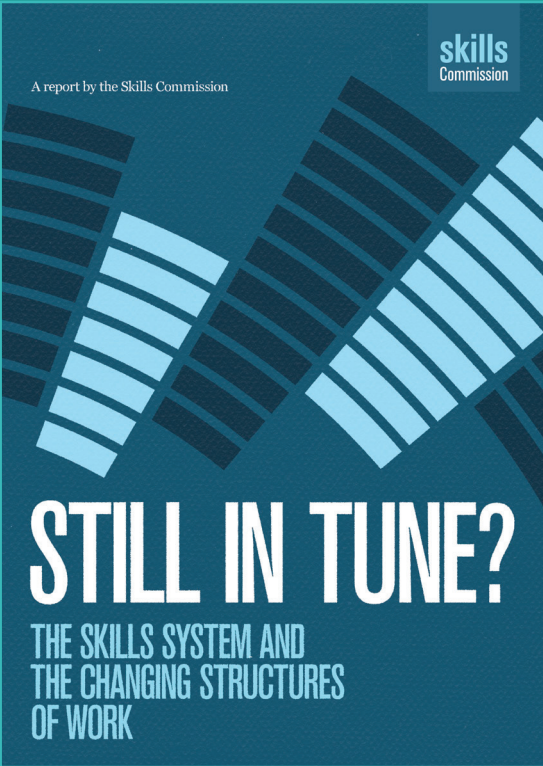
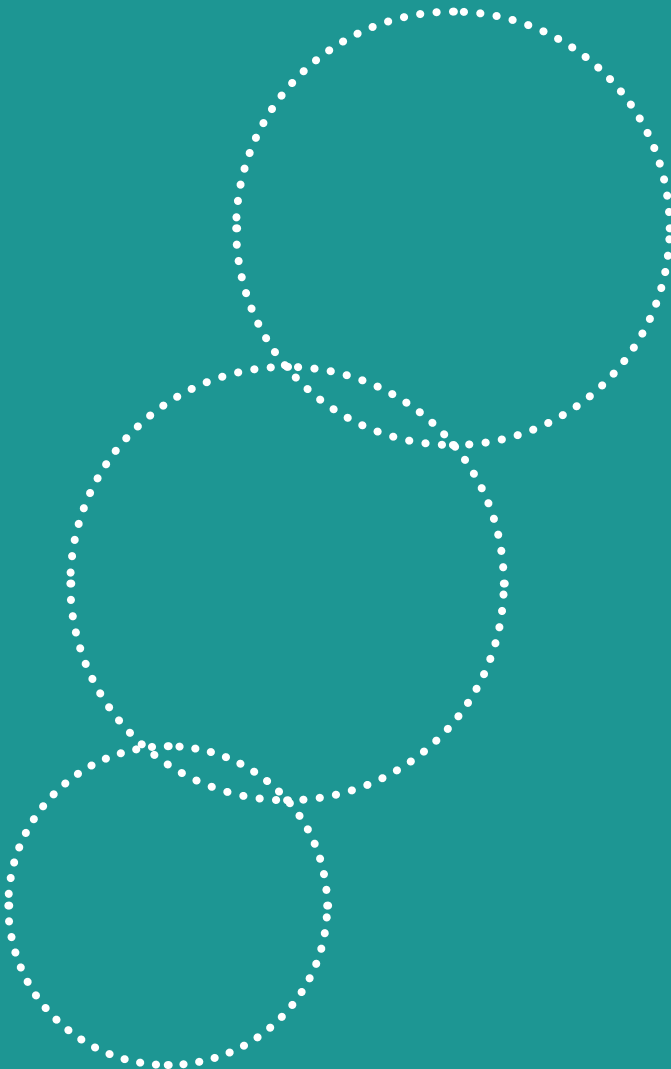
The title of the Skills Commission’s report into the Skills System and the changing structures of work poses a timely question. At a time when the electoral cycle affords us the opportunity of looking at manifestos and policy announcements, it’s important to look in detail at the system we have and how effectively or not it is working to deliver the long term skills needs of the economy. The findings of the report present stark reading and a number of challenges that future government’s need to consider and address.

When we were presented with the opportunity to sponsor this inquiry, we didn’t hesitate in saying “yes”. We understand that if we are going to grow our economy in the future; if UK businesses are to succeed at home and abroad in a competitive global economy; if our young people are going to become productive adults able to contribute positively to our economy; then it is vital that our skills system is responsive to the shifting nature and structures of work.

The world of work is ever-changing and no more so than at present, science, technology, digital, engineering, manufacturing sectors are all fast-moving. Jobs that are here today will be gone tomorrow and there will be jobs in the future which we can’t even begin to comprehend now.

We must have a skills system that is equally responsive, adaptable to changing circumstances and economic conditions and flexible enough to meet learner, employer and societal needs. Nothing should be set in stone, agility is key if we are to prepare our young people for the world

	Strategic alerts	What we can do
1	Uncertainty around the responsibility for training in an increasingly flexible labour market	Provide flexible models of curriculum delivery to support formal and informal learning, the attainment of qualifications or less formal ways of recognising achievements
2	Declining social mobility owing to a reduction in the alignment of skills provision to work	Continue to ensure our products and services align to the needs of learners, but also critically the employers and/or higher education institutions that receive those learners as they progress
3	Fragmentation in the system making it difficult for employers to engage	Education and skills needs a system wide review. We must create clarity about the purpose of different types of institutions and the pathways they create
4	Alarming policy dissonance between different Central Government departments	Lobby all government departments with a connection to the education and skills system



The Skills Commission’s newest report - ‘Still in Tune? The Skills System and the Changing Structures of Work’ was published on Monday, November 17



of work they will experience in future.

So what does this mean from the perspective of an exam board? What is our role in helping to prepare people to build a career and reach their potential in these shifting structures of work?

With an ever-changing and increasingly fluid labour market, we believe that programmes should equip learners with a broad range of skills that provide a solid base on which to they can progress throughout their lives. We know that keeping qualifications relevant to industry is key. Not only does the content of technical and professional courses need to be regularly reviewed and updated as necessary in order to keep up with industry and technological advances, but practitioners need to maintain links with their business counterparts as technology and working practices change.

As an exam board, we need to develop flexible assessments, yes they need to be valid and reliable, the technical basis for any assessment, but they also need to be suitable for the content of the course and the context of the learning. We fully expect that education in the future will be supported increasingly by digital means. Online platforms will help learners create personalised portfolios to take to employers and qualifications and assessments will be developed increasingly in close

partnership with business ensuring they are relevant and purposeful.

It might seem strange for an exam board to say this, but it’s not just about qualifications. Whilst recognising achievement is important, it’s also about putting the learner at the heart of a broader curriculum and building the values, habits and characteristics into our education and skills system that employers so often tell us are required for success in the workplace. It’s about teaching our young people not to give up when the going gets tough - how to work as a team, as well as how to work independently and about how to interact in the workplace. It’s about building in these ‘difficult to define’ skills into learning, which employers say time and again are lacking in some of our young people.

But we will only be able to build this responsive, relevant and adaptive skills system if we stop endlessly tinkering about with it.

We need to focus all our efforts on matching our skills system to the modern structures of work. Only then will we be doing justice to our young people in helping them prepare for an exciting, but challenging, future.

For more information see ocr.org.uk or contact us on **02476 851509** or email funding@ocr.org.uk

PROFILE



@REBECCAKCOONEY
REBECCA.COONEY@FEWEEK.CO.UK

“I’m a true Wolveronian,” says Wolverhampton-born Rajinder Mann, who left the UK for India shortly after birth only to return five years later unable to speak English.

“But I’m just as much a Punjabi Indian woman, and just as much a Sikh woman.”

The chief executive of the Network for Black Professionals adds: “I am who I am today as a result of my education.”

Mann’s father, Bhag, had left Punjab, India, in 1954 to come to the UK to work in Black Country factories.

But her mother, Ajit, went back to India with newborn Mann. And despite speaking no English herself, Mann’s mother was “diligent” in her attempts to help Mann and her younger brother, Bhupinder, learn the language upon returning.

“As a child, we were told to copy word for word chapters from a book, and then she would compare and assess the neatness of the writing — that was part of our growth,” she says.

“She did believe in education, they both did, and I’m very thankful for that.”

Mann has “fond memories” of the household, which soon came to include two younger sisters, Gurminder and Davinder.

“They never denied us anything — at Christmas time we’d get stockings and we’d have oranges and the odd gift,” she says.

“Looking back, I don’t know how my mum, who didn’t speak the language, knew that was what people did at Christmas.”

Mann knew from around the age of 14 she wanted to be a teacher, but her parents’ attitude to her education was not matched by her school.

“I was very clear I wanted to do a Bachelor of Education — don’t ask me how or why I knew this — I was encouraged just to do a certificate in education, but I wanted a degree,” she says.

“But there were lots of battles at school, with people saying: ‘You’re going to have an arranged marriage so what’s the point of you doing A-levels? You’re not going to university.’

“There was that negativity in the schools.”

Fortunately, Mann had a “partner in crime” in her best friend, another Asian girl called Pardip, who wanted to study law at university.

“Indian girls staying on to study were quite unheard of,” she says.

“So that helped, having someone with whom I could share those ambitions.

“We were of a small handful of girls who were allowed to study away from home, and that was a huge achievement and very much

down to my parents’ belief in education.”

Mann got her wish and went to Warwick University, but very early on during her time there, her parents dropped a bombshell on her.

“Unbeknown to me, they were fixing up an arranged marriage,” she says.

“My friends had been in a similar position, but I never I thought my parents would do that to me.

“They were very keen to get me to university but there was a lot of community pressure.”

Mann’s husband, Makhan, arrived from India in the same week she started university, which, she says cheerfully, was “a challenge”.

“I was just shown a photograph and told this the person I was going to marry,” she says.

“I was very anti, but it was a fait accompli, in many ways, and I just accepted it — I suppose I felt that it was my destiny.”

Despite this, Mann is quick to point out she bears her parents no ill will over the marriage.

“From their point of view, they only wanted the best and I’ve got nothing against arranged marriages,” she says.

Determined to continue her studies, Mann transferred her degree to Wolverhampton.

“And when she became pregnant in her final year, she refused to let it get in her way,

first disguising her pregnancy beneath a large coat and then turning down the opportunity to take a term out when she finally told the university.

Two weeks after giving birth to son Amandeep, she sat her final exams.

“I was in the hospital with my English and history books, gave birth, and then I was back to my books,” she says.

“It was sheer determination.”

The experience must have been difficult, but Mann grins broadly as she tells me about it.

She qualified as teacher in 1980, but unfortunately the path to her dream job was not as simple as she’d hoped.

“I’d get interviews and their jaws would drop when I’d turn up because they weren’t expecting an Asian woman,” she says.

“There were setbacks and knocks like that on a few occasions. I thought by having the qualifications, that would enable me to progress, but I don’t think that’s always the case.

“I think being a woman, being an Indian woman, all of those things, the barriers, the stereotypes do get in the way, and those have shaped my career history.”

Mann didn’t get into teaching, and instead got involved with community work and community education.

Once again, there’s no self-pity about the

way Mann talks of her experiences, which “sparked” a lasting interest in inequality in education.

“It was very frustrating but you just get on with it,” she says.

After working for various local authorities in community support and equality roles, an MA in race and education, and the birth of her daughter Pirandeep, Mann took up a post as North Birmingham College’s outreach co-ordinator in 1988, which she says, allowed her to combine her qualifications and her experiences.

At 40, Mann took stock, and decided to get a divorce.

“I started questioning life, and I felt I was being hypocritical, not true to myself,” she says.

After a stint at Bilston Community College and the National Institute of Continuing Adult Education and co-ordinating the Black Leadership Initiative, Mann found herself at Network for Black professionals, becoming its chief executive in 2013.

“The sector did change and has gone through a process of change, since then but I think we’re going backwards because people are frightened of saying you’ve got to do targeted interventions,” she says.

“I’m not for separatist provision, but at the moment you’ve got to have that in order for people to be able to compete effectively in the

mainstream provision.

“You have to have a long term, sustainable approach rather than a reactionary approach — what it requires is that you use evidence to support the change you wish to see, and I feel that that isn’t being done, not in the FE Sector.”

And Mann isn’t done with her own education yet — although she has an honorary doctorate from the University of Wolverhampton the idea of a PhD is tempting, she admits.

“I’d like to do something on the the impact of the network — we’ve gone from four to 17 black principals in a decade, that’s a huge achievement,” she says.

Sadly, one of the driving forces behind Mann’s education, her father Bhag, did not live to see her honorary doctorate or her OBE awarded.

“Going to the palace was an amazing experience for my mum and I always wished my dad had been there to see it — it was part of his dream,” she says.

“He would have been so proud of the honorary doctorate — my mum was in floods of tears.

“I would never have dreamed I’d get that sort of recognition, for a girl from a Wolverhampton state school.

“Yes, I knew I wanted to teach, but I had no idea where that was going to take me.”

It’s a personal thing

What’s your favourite book?

The Help by Kathryn Stockett. The key thing is that it’s about women pushing a the boundaries and how important it is to have people who are really wanting to make a difference

What do you do to switch off from work?

I’m not very good at switching off from work if I’m honest. I like being at home, because I have to travel quite a bit so I like touching base. I like cooking, fusion cooking, so Asian and English and whatever else really — even if it’s Italian it still becomes Italian Indian because I like my chillies

If you could invite anyone to a dinner party, living or dead, who would it be?

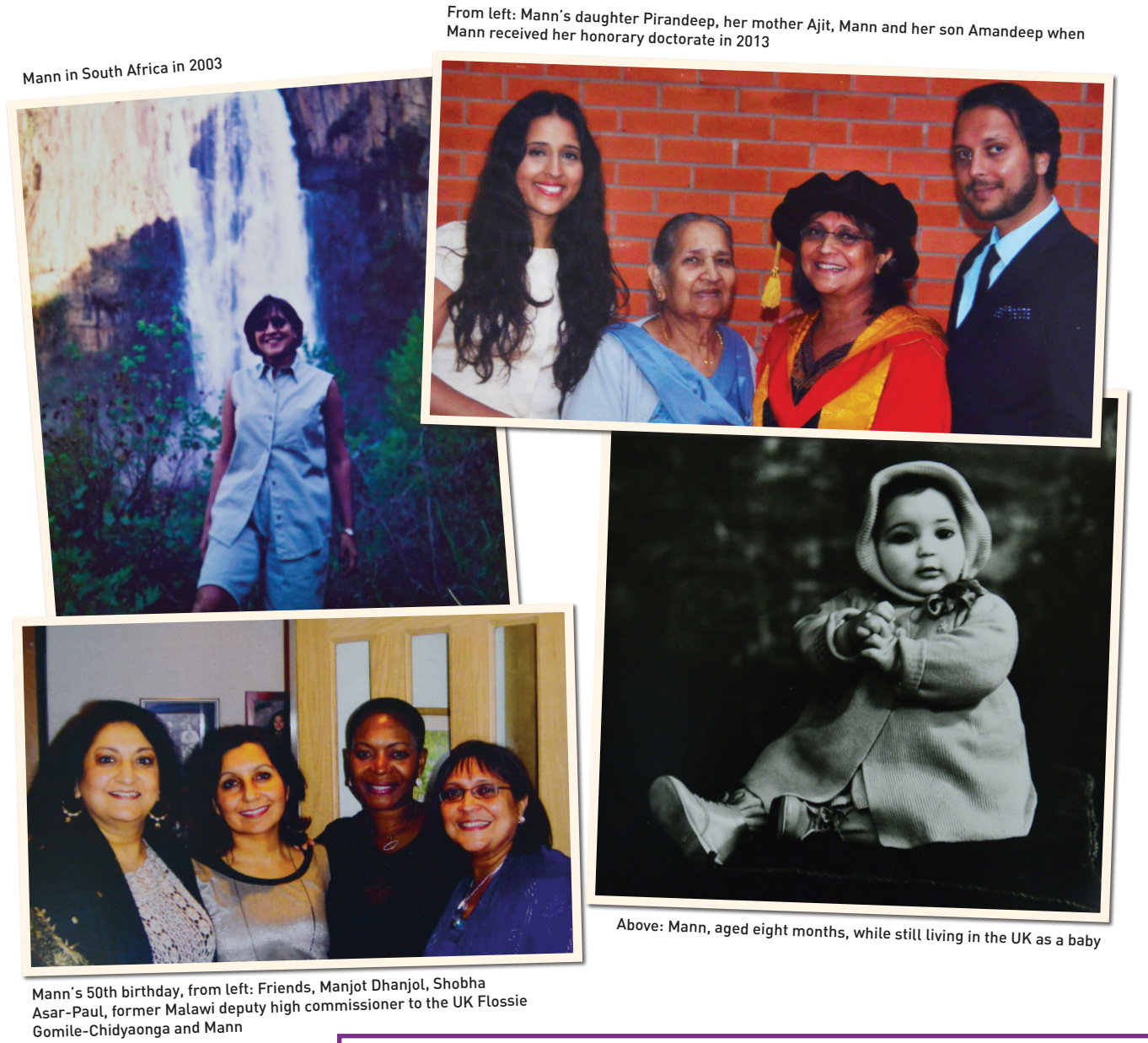
Bobby Kennedy and JFK, Nelson Mandela, Hilary Clinton, Obama, Gandhi, and the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji

What’s your pet hate?

Hypocrites. I feel very strongly that you have to walk the talk. Other pet hates include people jumping in front of you in queues and people who swear. I hate that

What did you want to be when you grew up?

I knew very clearly that I wanted to be a teacher. I don’t know what drove me to that



Mann in South Africa in 2003

From left: Mann’s daughter Pirandeep, her mother Ajit, Mann and her son Amandeep when Mann received her honorary doctorate in 2013

Mann’s 50th birthday, from left: Friends, Manjot Dhanjot, Shobha Asar-Paul, former Malawi deputy high commissioner to the UK Flossie Gomile-Chidiyaonga and Mann

Above: Mann, aged eight months, while still living in the UK as a baby

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SECRET PRINCIPAL

The principal of a large and well-established FE college writes about life at the top — the worries, the hopes, the people and the issues they have to deal with every day.

So it's Association of Colleges conference time again. I think this is my fourteenth year of coming and to be frank not much has changed over the years.

The usual scene through the course of the three or so days is a few hollow-eyed and grim looking faces following the late nights being entertained by delights of the Hyatt bar for instance late on Tuesday evening is an exhibition in itself.

But conference does provide some respite to the long and hard first term we all have to deal with.

Let's face it, conference provides a mix of serious and intelligent debate together with some light-hearted fun too. The exhibition stands and staff from over 130 exhibitors this year vying for the attention of principals, FE is big business for many of them and they have a captive audience.

We were treated to a fairly predictable and heavy political assessment of our world punctuated with some talk about skills and education

On Tuesday, we were treated to a fairly predictable and heavy political assessment of our world punctuated with some talk about skills and education. Talk of men in white coats got my attention early on and there were a few raised eyebrows later in the day when Gaganomics entered our psyche. I wonder how many people are now going to try and explain that one to staff on their return to work? Seriously though, it was thought-provoking and reminded me of a recent headline from this paper and a principal who didn't quite get it right on social media. Bet he had a poker

The Secret Principal features on the last Monday of every month

face (pun intended) when that presentation was going on.

Dr Collins had the majority of the audience eating out the palm of his hand in a way only he can do

Martin Doel gave in my view a good speech urging conference to challenge the politicians on differing fronts. Well that would be good but for some reason when Nick Boles sat on the sofa with Emily Maitlis following a rather dull and uninspired speech it simply didn't happen. Emily failed to get the audience engaged and allow us to question him. Mr Boles started by saying how vital and important education is to the economy both short and long term but when pressed about ring fencing funding for 16 to 18 he became more non committal than ever. Shame, literally.

On the other hand Liam Byrne gave in my opinion a far better account of himself. Then we had Dr David Collins interviewed about his role as FE Commissioner and the lessons learned over the past year. A few minutes in and he had the majority of the audience eating out the palm of his hand in a way only he can do. I predict a knighthood within two years.

Because of print deadline I can't comment on what Vince Cable and others will say but it will probably if not definitely be his last time addressing conference, I think without his firm stance and belief that FE transforms people's lives and is fundamentally good for business and the economy our sector would be in a far worse state. Thanks Vince.

Finally, it was especially good to hear FE Week described by Emily as the "bible" for the sector. A little controversial maybe but pleasing none the less.

Secret Principal



KATHRYN RUDD
Principal of National Star College

Local offers for disabled learners ‘missing’ nearby specialist providers

A system of ‘Local Offers’ for children and adults with special educational needs went live in September. Kathryn Rudd reviews the progress and finds worrying results.

For young people with disabilities and their families, the much-awaited Children and Families Act promised a more coherent and aspirational approach to their education. The Act promised a joined-up education, health and care plan, instead of endless assessments and wrangling between departments about who should pay for what. It heralded new independent advice and guidance — central to which was an information portal in each Local Authority (LA), the ‘Local Offer’.

This was a huge undertaking for each LA, particularly at a time of stringent cuts and with reduced capacity.

They needed to provide comprehensive information for people with disabilities aged from birth to 25.

They also needed to include information about out-of-county, specialist providers who were listed on the Section 41 list.

Young people and their families would be allowed to name organisations on this list as their ‘preferred provider’ on Education, Heath and Care plans.

On September 1 the first Local Offers went live. Well, a few did. Many had got notices on their websites saying some of the Offer had been completed and they were working on the rest.

respond and only two initially put us on their Local Offers.

We were thrilled when one LA actually approached us to ask whether we could provide them with information for their Local Offer.

We have been researching what is available and our research demonstrated that National Star, and indeed other specialist providers, were largely invisible across Local Offers.

Natspec, the Association of Specialist Colleges, undertook more research at the end of October and a significant proportion of Local Offers did not mention out-of-county specialist colleges (and indeed some didn't mention specialist providers that were in-county), many did not provide a link to Natspec, and more worryingly didn't provide a Section 41 link.

This is changing on a daily basis and LAs are putting information out, although many are now struggling with old information cluttering up their Offers and confusing the situation still further.

So, on the ground, what is happening? Parents say it is reinforcing inequality. If you have a skilled parent or advocate who can work the system and fight, you stand a chance of getting to the college of your choice.

One of our parents kept a diary last year of her fight to access National Star — she recorded more than 600 hours of work with different agencies to access the college that best met her daughter's needs and aspirations.

Young people and their parents are telling us that even if you know the Local Offer exists you actually need to already know what you are searching for as they are just so complex to navigate.

With all this added complexity, advice and guidance by careers staff, schools and independent supporters becomes even more critical.

However, parents are reporting they are getting inaccurate information. Some parents have been told there is no provision for students with complex needs in county even when the local specialist college has “outstanding” provision for these learners. Others have been told that to get to a specialist college they will need to self-fund.

I seem to remember a lot of talk about a “level playing field” across pre and post-16 provision.

We want to know the reality for young people with disabilities, so in partnership with parents we have established a survey to enable their voices to be heard. Visit www.surveymonkey.com/s/NationalStarSEN to take part.

And the one college that actually asked us for information for its local offer – it took us off two weeks ago.

A significant proportion of Local Offers did not mention out-of-county specialist colleges (and indeed some didn't mention specialist providers that were in-county)

Many had seconded a local special school head to lead on the implementation of the Local Offer so understandably the majority had prioritised their school age provision.

We sent information to LAs about what we could offer — the majority of LAs did not



ANDY GANNON
Director of policy, public relations and research, 157 Group

Traineeship news offers welcome break from ‘wholesale change’

Proposals to change the way traineeship providers are funded were rejected following the government's eight-week consultation on the issue. Andy Gannon explains what this, plus some of the changes that were sanctioned, means for the sector.

Amid ongoing media rumours of yet more pressure on budgets after the next election and a looming Autumn Statement, this week's government response to the traineeships funding consultation may have made some slightly more pleasant reading for many in the FE sector.

What seemed, in the summer, to be a consultation heralding potentially wholesale change to the funding system around the relatively new initiative that is traineeships has, it appears, turned into an acknowledgement that we can make better use of data on student outcomes, but that any real change in this area has to be ‘incremental’.

This message alone should allow us some space to rejoice. After being pummelled with reform after reform for the past four years, it seems that some sense has prevailed. You don't get to assess the benefits of any new initiative if you constantly tinker around with it.

Whether this new-found love of funding stability is a sign that that message has been understood for good, or is simply a sign of political pragmatism six months ahead of a general election will only become clear in time, of course. But, for now, it is a positive.

And, more than that, what the response does include is tinkering which expands the opportunities for young people and employers to engage with traineeships — applying the same criteria to those over 19 as those under 19, increasing eligibility and acknowledging the important possibility

that a traineeship may prepare someone for further learning, rather than a job or an apprenticeship.

In our recent Future Colleges report, the 157 Group called for policy change to be tested against four key principles — stable structures, equal treatment, freedom to innovate and durable funding. In some ways, this week's response meets all four of those criteria.

Many colleges, in particular, will now see real opportunity to expand their traineeship offer in partnership with employers of all sizes. And that can only be a good thing.

Aside from the question of political motivation, there remains one fly in the ointment, however. What is really meant by ‘making better use of data on progression and outcomes’?

We are also awaiting the response on the recent BIS consultation around outcome success measures, which was curiously quiet about how these measures might be used, and Ofsted has merely said it will take all measures into account when forming judgments.

History teaches us that, once data is available, we have a tendency to interpret it simplistically — to compile league tables and set minimum standards, and then to reform our funding and accountability systems to enforce the achievement of those standards.

But we all know that learner outcomes are affected by a plethora of factors — including personal and economic ones — of which the quality of their college experience is only one.

‘Making better use of the data’ should mean that we use it to understand this complete picture, and interrogate it intelligently so that it can inform the development not just of our approach to funding and accountability, but to policymaking itself.

Whether our system is mature enough to be able to do that is the one question that this week's response leaves unanswered.

Many colleges, in particular, will now see real opportunity to expand their traineeship offer

It doesn't change the fundamental structure of the programme or its funding system, and it therefore provides some small sense of durability within which providers can plan. It removes some of the artificial age divide at 19, which, as we know, stems from nothing other than the way in which government organises itself and has nothing to do with how young people actually experience the world. And, in emphasising the need for programmes to be individualised, it genuinely encourages innovation.





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CHARLOTTE BOSWORTH

Director of skills and employment at OCR

Reflecting on day one of the Association of Colleges conference

A review of English and maths accreditation is welcome, but should not result in new qualifications, says Charlotte Bosworth.

In the Skills Minister Nick Boles’ introduction to his speech he mentioned a moment full of risk, his analogy was to make a party political point about the choice the electorate face in May’s general election, but for me the analogy works well for the place we find ourselves in as a sector.

In my foreword to the FE Week Reader’s Manifesto, I mentioned the political football nature of reform and constant churn that has affected our sector for too many electoral cycles.

I believe that although relatively policy light, the two inputs we had on the first day of the AoC Conference from the Skills Minister and his Shadow Cabinet counterpart suggested that this initiative churn shows no sign of abating.

Nick spoke of English and maths and the need to review the best ways to accredit these, including in said review employers, providers and exam boards.

But we must not rush to create new qualifications or assessments nor must we rush to re-title something that as a qualification type is still in its infancy and beginning to gain credibility with employers.

We must look at how we create capacity in the institutions that we already have, rather than creating further complexity to layer onto our already complex system

Liam Byrne spoke of three shifts needed in FE — for FE to become the new spine of professional and technical education, to have as many people going into apprenticeships as university, and for FE to become closer to business. These are laudable aspirations, but we

must ensure we continue to provide services through FE that cater to the needs of the entire cohort and we must avoid the rush to an apprenticeship arms race over numbers of starts.

The quality of provision is still more important than the quantity. But Liam also spoke of his party’s vision for Institutes of Technical Education, and this for me is an area of concern.

Through policy churn we have, in some places, lost a sense of the purpose of different types of education and provision.

If Institutes of Technical Education is a plan to create another layer of different types of institutions then we must resist it.

We should be able to look critically at where we are as a sector and if there is a gap to fill to meet the technical education needs of learners, then we must look at how we create capacity in the institutions that we already have, rather than creating further complexity to layer onto our already complex system.

The Skills Minister also spoke of the outcomes of the traineeships funding consultation that the government ran in the summer.

The announcement signals a greater parity between arrangements for traineeship funding between 16 to 18-year-olds and 19 to 24-year-olds.

Our response to the consultation had argued for greater consistency in programme management.

One of the key issues is that in the way that the government department’s responsibilities are split, there is an artificial policy divide at 19. We are pleased that the announcements in the government response to the consultation address this in both learner eligibility and approach to funding.

I was also pleased that, in the announcement, the government is looking at an “evolutionary” approach rather than a revolutionary one in the move to a greater focus on outcomes.

In the simplest terms, the answer to the consultation’s central question about whether there should be a greater focus on positive outcomes was ‘yes’. However, I think we must be clear about what behaviours we want to drive.

In schools policy, we have seen the all-pervading effect of performance tables and their ability to drive school curriculum offer and qualification choice.

But the often hidden message is that education is broader than just the exam syllabus. So we must ensure that in this evolutionary approach we keep in mind and guard against the introduction of a new set of ‘performance measures’ that to help those easiest to help and to forget those young people who need time and support.



ANDREW MORRIS

Member of the Learning and Skills Research Network (LSRN) planning group and member of the Policy Consortium

A sea change in evidence?

Andrew Morris looks at how problems affecting FE practitioners are being tackled with an appreciation of the need for evidence, and how this evidence might be used to bid for research funding in tough economic times.

South Staffordshire College and Thurrock Adult Community College are anything to go by, a significant change in the use of evidence is taking place.

Teachers and managers from these and many other organisations discussed the practicalities of using research at the latest workshop of the Learning & Skills Research Network (LSRN).

The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, the College of Policing and the Alliance for Useful Evidence — all established in the last five years — bear witness to this recent upsurge.

In education, the remarkable success of the Education Endowment Foundation’s ‘Toolkit’ of evidence-based practices in teaching and learning has been used by more than half of secondary schools in its three years of existence.

Innovation requires a degree of risk-taking and leaders have to weigh this up in allocating budgets

Numerous organisations are now helping get the right kind of evidence in the right format to those who need it most — practitioners and decision-makers at the frontline.

What this means in practical terms for the learning and skills sector is illustrated by the work of Michael Smith and Paul Roberts, team leaders at Barking and Dagenham College.

Having identified an important college-wide issue — initial assessment procedures that assigned too many students to the wrong level — they set about collating information, looking at existing research and proposing a new approach to the senior team.

With their support a pilot scheme was developed and carefully tested. As Michael said: “We were then able to move forward with knowledge and understanding from the testing.”

Chris Davies, director of curriculum at South Staffordshire College, reinforces the

importance of first identifying a serious college-wide problem and then taking an evidence-based approach.

A study he had undertaken revealed that 40 per cent of staff non-teaching time was spent on activity not related to teaching. On the basis of this changes were made, such as aligning central administrative staff with curriculum areas on each campus.

From the many examples of evidence-use brought out at the workshop, some idea of the practicalities began to emerge. “Stop waiting for government initiatives” was one piece of sound advice; “stop counting beans” was another, equally pithy.

The key message, repeated in case after case, was to start by identifying a key problem that seriously affects student learning and then arm yourself with knowledge and evidence.

To do this, requires space and time for reflection and experimentation. Finding these scarce resources was a recurring theme.

The solution demonstrated in many successful initiatives is to make use of existing structures such as professional development days and to focus on problems that will help the organisation move forward. No doubt the new grants announced at the workshop from the Further Education Trust for Leadership will help, providing financial and professional support for a number of new practice-based studies.

Encouragement from leadership teams proves an essential ingredient in the view of most project leaders. But for budget-holders it is not easy to decide where to invest.

Research does not generally provide simple answers guaranteed to improve outcomes — by definition it addresses unknowns.

Innovation requires a degree of risk-taking and leaders have to weigh this up in allocating budgets. So what can project leaders do to persuade a reluctant leadership team? Be pragmatic seemed to be the advice from participants — if the leadership team is accountability-minded, base your research on the data they collect. If a research investment carries a big risk, look for previous studies first, then pilot it on a small scale.

The overarching message from initiatives in different parts of the sector is that evidence-use is not just an individual affair — it flourishes when a collaborative approach spreads across an organisation. Trust is the key — trusting relationships in which sound evidence and professional judgement justify the risk of investing in innovative approaches.

In such an environment an evidence-using culture can develop which, over time, offers the prospect of better outcomes for both learners and the bottom line.



MARY CURNOCK COOK

UCas chief executive

Vocational system progress — despite what Clegg says

Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg fleshed out his idea, first revealed in February, for a UCas-style system for post-16 vocational learning this month. Mary Curnock describes the progress UCas has made with its system that already meets such requirements.

The Deputy Prime Minister called again for a ‘UCAS-style’ system for younger students who need to make decisions about their post-16 education choices. He joins a list of senior politicians and leading commentators who have made the same call at various times over recent years.

The benefits of the UCas centralised admissions service for higher education have long been recognised. It provides a single point of information, a comprehensive course search, and a common, fair and streamlined admissions service which is available for a generation that expects to use digital interfaces for almost everything it needs.

The march towards a digital future is not in doubt, but how colleges stay on course is the cause of many a sleepless night for those in the FE sector, explains Ian Fordham.

There is a critical mass of factors coming together around the digital agenda in the UK that has the potential to disrupt and change the way the organisations operate and do business, as well as having far-reaching consequences for FE colleges and providers on the ground.

Numerous reports, including the Government Digital Strategy and Digital Inclusion plan, working groups and other forums have been set up to understand the implications of the digital world, culminating in the much-heralded Further Education Learning Technology Action Group (Feltag) report.

But despite the promise of that report, and the now aspirational 10 per cent online learning requirement, we are hearing from many principals and senior leaders that they are frustrated and struggling to get to grips with where to go next on tech and the digital agenda.

From our work on the Digital Colleges programme, set up by The Education Foundation and Penny Power, chair of Digital Business Britain, we have found that there is a growing distance between the ‘promise of digital’ and frankly too much tech evangelism, and the reality on the ground, in terms of implementation and sustainable change. In addition, leaders are looking for a much

A highly valued benefit of the service is the rich data it provides about progression to higher education.

UCas has now deployed its expertise to provide a similar service for post-16 progression.

UCas Progress (UP) lists all post-16 learning opportunities in England and Wales and students can search for subject, by course-type, by geographical location or provider type.

They can apply for courses online, and they can access plenty of information and advice to help them make informed choices about post-16 studies.

More than 100,000 courses through 4,550 providers display GCSE, A-level, vocational, work-based and apprenticeship courses.

Currently, we’re registering more than 2.5 million page views per month and our advice pages received 350,000 views alone in the last four weeks.

The service is free of charge for students,

whether they register through a school or self-register at home. Course listings are also free of charge for providers.

A modest subscription — typically £500 to £2,500 a-year — is made for providers who want to be switched on to receive, track, monitor and report on online applications.

More than 1,000 providers are using the application service already and more are being added all the time.

One user is Etone College, in Warwickshire, which found that UP not only enables them to streamline the application process and track outcomes, but also to increase awareness and aspiration for progression to higher education through UCas in the future.

Swansea local authority working with UCas Progress more than halved its Neet numbers

In many cases, the UP service has been adopted at a Local Authority level, where our tracking services provide aid planning, track and reduce Neets, manage the September Guarantee, and ensure that RPA requirements are met.

For example, Swansea local authority working with UP, more than halved its Neet numbers from 6.9 per cent in 2009 to 3 per cent in 2011 and has sustained that level



IAN FORDHAM

Co-founder of the Education Foundation and author of the Digital Colleges report

Pragmatism not evangelism needed on shift to digital

clearer roadmap to become Digital Colleges, and a digitally driven sector, rather than being sent down “technology cul-de-sacs”.

In our report, (visit www.digitalcolleges.co.uk to download a copy of the Digital Colleges report) launched at the Association of Colleges conference, we showcase the digital journeys of FE leaders who are delivering high quality digital solutions across their institutions and sprinting past other sectors in terms of innovation and impact in their use of digital.

We also set out a framework for digital colleges that brings together all areas of provider practice and administration, from HR to finance to the engagement of small and medium-sized enterprises and the community to harnessing the potential of social media for the good of the whole of the organisation.

By starting with a much broader definition of digital, we argue there is a much better chance of the vibrant FE and skills sector

achieving its ambitions. And while the lights dim on Feltag and the

There is a growing distance between the ‘promise of digital’ and frankly too much tech evangelism

new cross-Whitehall Education Technology Action Group reports its mostly school-related findings in January 2015, it is vital that the FE sector is on the front foot in the digital arena and there is a clear policy roadmap from government to ensure this transformation is not cut short.

since. It has used UP to track and report on student progression, enabling limited numbers of outreach staff to target their interventions where most needed.

Ensuring that young people stay in some form of education or training until they are 18 requires consistency of approach and UP ensures that learners get all the information and advice they need to make informed decisions, with a simple application process.

UP also supports those working with students; giving teachers and advisers dedicated tracking tools, as well as the reports, insight, and data needed to fulfill their statutory obligations.

UCas already provides a range of similar services for undergraduate admissions, post graduate courses, teacher training, and conservatoires. In each case, we develop our services around the needs of users — students, those who support them, and education providers.

Our services are developed and enhanced with the guidance of user groups so that it is our customers who dictate their content and scope, and have a stake in the success of the service.

As an independent charity, we are happy to work closely with government departments to ensure our data conforms to common standards, but it will be our service users who dictate how our services develop, including UP.

We welcome the Deputy Prime Minister’s support for this initiative but we have no reason to delay until September next year. UP is available now.

Like many pragmatic colleges and leaders, we as an organisation are not dazzled by the bright lights of technology — but the digital economy is here to stay and growing at a frenetic pace.

The digital economy now accounts for almost 9 per cent of total GDP and between 2009 and 2012, 83,000 new technology and digital industry jobs were created, while the number of tech and digital companies has almost doubled from 50,000 to 88,000.

The FE and skills sector must harness its potential and be at the forefront of its development of this important sector, not technology for technology’s sake, but rather technology for all learners, staff and the wider community.

Now is the time for FE and policy leaders to move past the “bright lights of tech” and see the systemic change happening in this space.

It is vital that the leaders and ideas identified in our Digital Colleges report become the norm and not the exception.

As one FE principal said at the launch of our report, the Digital Colleges programme challenges the FE and skills sector to consider the digital agenda across the learner journey, across our businesses and between our stakeholders.

Its focus is not on a new paradigm or promise but on pragmatism, for far too long the digital box has been empty and the challenge for college leaders is to fill it with purpose.

We couldn’t agree more and welcome dialogue from the sector about how we can work together to achieve this vision.

CAMPUS ROUND-UP

Agriculture studies return to college after 13-year absence

Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) invited local farmers to a celebration of the re-launch of agriculture into its syllabus after a 13-year absence, writes Paul Offord.

A college that stopped offering agriculture courses following an outbreak of foot and mouth disease is now helping tackle the problem of farming's ageing working population.

There were farming-based courses taught at the 1500-learner Berkshire College of Agriculture (BCA) for more than 50 years until they were stopped in 2001. The college was even rebranded — it is only called BCA on its website — to avoid confusion after it stopped teaching agriculture, but carried on offering a variety of FE courses including sport, equine studies, science, floristry and horticulture.

But it launched a level three extended diploma in agriculture in September which was celebrated this month with an official launch party.

It was attended by more than 20 local farmers, past and present students and representatives from the Country Land Owners Association and the National Farmers Union.

Victoria Beckwith, head of department for agriculture, horticulture and countryside,



Current agriculture students outside the college, Inset: Learners waking away from the college 55 years ago

said: “Our slogan for the launch event was ‘putting the A back into BCA’ as it was obviously a shame that a college with our name had stopped teaching agriculture.”

Current learners celebrated the return of agriculture to the syllabus at the launch event by restaging black and white photos taken of students in 1949.

Mrs Beckwith said: “The college first opened in 1948 when we were the Berkshire Institute of Agriculture and mainly prepared servicemen returning from the Second World

War to work in farming.

“We were sadly forced to stop teaching the subject after an outbreak of foot and mouth in 2001 because farmers weren’t sending their children to train with us any more, as they weren’t certain there was a future in livestock and arable farming.”

Ms Beckwith said the outlook for the farming industry was now more positive and they took the decision to launch the new course following a number of enquiries from local farmers.

She said: “We are seeing an ageing population among the agriculture workforce and decided to do something to help train the next generation.

“The course covers livestock and arable farming, estate management and tractor skills.”

Local farmer and college governor Colin Rayner turned 54 acres of grassland on college grounds into a working arable farm over the summer which the students will now train on.

Ms Beckwith said: “They will gain hands’ on experience of things like growing crops and how to work a tractor.

“They will also work at local farms which run dairy and livestock herds.”

A total of 11 women and seven men, aged between 16 and 28, have signed-up for the course so far.



Current students and guests at the re-launch event

DO YOU WANT TO BE IN CAMPUS ROUND-UP?
Send your stories with pictures to campus@feweek.co.uk including names, ages and course details of students where applicable

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Your weekly guide to who's new and who's leaving

Norton Radstock College principal Shirley Arayan is to retire at the end of the month having held the role for nearly 16 years, it has been announced.

She made the decision to retire at the beginning of the year, but the date was formally announced by chair of governors Chris Dando this week.

Mrs Arayan who started teaching part-time when her own children were small also worked at South Bristol College before moving to Norton Radstock College as a lecturer in health and community care in 1986.

She worked as vice principal to four others before becoming principal in 1999 and said: “When I arrived at the college there were 42 wooden huts on the site and 100 16 to 18-year-olds enrolled; now we have purpose built buildings and 800 plus students including apprentices.

“I enjoy talking to the students the most; there is a perception that teenagers are awful and that’s not true — we have some really great students here.

“I’ve seen different generations of the

same family at the college and quite often I’m stopped by people who say: ‘Do you remember me? You changed my life’.”

Interim principal will be the college’s current vice principal, Henry Logan.

Mr Dando said: “The governors would like to thank Shirley for the significant contribution that she has made to the college and would like to wish her a long and happy retirement.”

Meanwhile, Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (Cache) chief executive Nick Cutland is also leaving his organisation at the end of the month, having reached the end of his six-month contract.

He will be replaced on an interim basis by Sarah Johnson.

Mr Cutland said: “I have greatly enjoyed my time working with Cache and all the many colleagues I have got to know and work with over the last three-and-a-half years.

Ms Johnson’s began her career teaching and developing Access courses in London. She has developed quality improvement systems and processes within OCN, the Learning and Skills Council and several colleges.



Shirley Arayan



Sarah Johnson



Nick Cutland

“I am pleased to be returning to the awarding organisation world at a time of change for the sector,” she said.

Marilyn Hawkins, Cache chair, said: “In the board’s appointment of Ms Johnson, Cache’s customers and all our partners can



Henry Logan

be assured that they will continue to receive the excellent service they have come to expect from Cache.

“We would like to thank Mr Cutland for everything he has done for Cache and wish him great success for the future.”

If you want to let us know of any new faces at the top of your college, training provider or awarding organisation please let us know by emailing news@feweek.co.uk



FURTHER EDUCATION
TRUST FOR LEADERSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENT

THE FETL GRANTS PROGRAMME

The Further Education Trust for Leadership (FETL) is pleased to announce the launch of its Grants programme.

At FETL, we want to build a body of knowledge to shape the thinking about leadership in Further Education. We recognise that crucial as they are, the skills of leadership are insufficient in themselves for the leadership of the constantly adaptive layer in the education system. FETL is determined to change this.

FETL Grants of up to £100,000 are available for organisations working in the field of UK FE and Skills to undertake projects which develop knowledge of and for leadership in FE. We welcome applications from organisations with innovative and visionary ideas, particularly around leading learning, who work in the field of FE and Skills.

If you are attending the AoC Annual Conference please visit us at our stand near Reception.

For details of how to apply please visit www.fetl.org.uk or call us on 0203 637 0977

twitter.com/FETforL



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JOB



Deputy Principal - Teaching and Learning

Leeds • Salary: £97,000-£107,000 (including PRP)

Take your career to another level as you play a key leadership role within one of the UK's largest FE colleges. Due to the promotion of the existing post holder to a Principal's role in the North West, we have a fantastic opportunity to join this highly successful college with 1,500 staff and more than 35,000 students. Our goal is to deliver an exceptional learning experience as we support and inspire every student to achieve their full potential. If you can help us make that goal a reality, we can promise you an outstanding future in this dynamic and evolving environment.

Leading and managing all areas of the College curriculum, your challenge is to create and sustain a culture of excellence, innovation and delivery that meets the needs of every student. Ensuring that teaching and learning is consistently of the highest possible standard, your wide-ranging role will include developing innovative curriculum delivery approaches, enhancing and planning our curriculum offer and monitoring and reporting on curriculum KPIs against stretching targets. You will also be a member of the College Executive team delivering the College's ambitious strategic plan. Leading the drive to improve success rates as well as overseeing our professional learning for teachers programmes, you will ensure that teaching, learning and assessment strategies impact positively on continuous

quality improvement. A strong team leader with proven experience of managing significant change in a large FE setting, you will bring a successful track record of working with effective performance management systems, driving improvements and achieving targets.

For further details and to apply, please visit www.leedscitycollege.ac.uk/jobs or contact HR on 0113 308 7900.

Closing date: 5 December 2014. Interview dates: 17 and 18 December 2014.

Leeds City College celebrates diversity. We are committed to safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults. All successful applicants are required to complete an enhanced DBS check.

All applicants will be treated fairly irrespective of race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion & belief or age. The college actively welcomes applications from all sections of the community.

play your part

leedscitycollege.ac.uk

Recruiting for ESOL Personnel

Gateway Qualifications is recruiting experienced ESOL personnel. If you have ESOL experience in Assessment Writing, Assessment Reviewing, experience as an ESOL Marker or you have expertise in ESOL International we would like to hear from you.

We will provide a training programme and support you in your role. If you enjoy working alongside dedicated and motivated professionals, in the first instance please send your CV and a covering letter to

hr@gatewayqualifications.org.uk by 28th November 2014.

Richmond upon Thames College

Vice Principal, Curriculum & Learner Services

£75,000 per annum

At Richmond upon Thames College we are justifiably proud of our staff and students, who are focused on our vision of being "excellent in everything we do." Operating from a single campus with a current income of £20million, we attract our cohort of 3,500 learners from over three-quarters of London's boroughs. Our strong student outcomes and our inclusive, nurturing environment ensure that our College is an aspirational place to study.

Following the recent appointment of our new Principal we are now looking to appoint a Vice Principal, Curriculum & Learner Services to assist us with shaping our curriculum and developing our commercial offer, ensuring impressive results are delivered.

This senior post will provide an ideal platform for an aspiring and talented individual with experience of curriculum leadership and innovation to work as part of the Principalship team, which always puts learners first and is committed to delivering excellence. Working alongside the Assistant Principal for Quality, the post holder will be responsible for driving new ideas and curriculum initiatives to continue our journey towards becoming an Outstanding College.

The College is currently engaged in the planning stages of a major, ambitious redevelopment project (Richmond Education and Enterprise Campus) which provides for an exciting future for the College.

The successful candidate for this position will have an impressive record in curriculum innovation with the ability to translate vision into reality and to inspire staff, learners and external partners. FE sector experience would be beneficial, although we would consider strong individuals from other complex organisations, and a passion for education is essential.

If you have the vision, enthusiasm and experience to be a part of the driving force in our transformation please view our website at <http://aocrecruit.co.uk/rutcollege> where an application pack can be accessed online.

Closing date is Sunday 30 November 2014

Final selection for the post is anticipated to take place on Friday 12 December 2014.

JOB

Lancaster & Morecambe College

Lancaster & Morecambe College is seeking to appoint an outstanding leader and experienced curriculum manager as a Senior Post Holder in its Senior Management Team. You may have aspirations to become a future principal, or wish to develop your career and contribute strategically in a high performing, financially outstanding vocational college situated in an area of outstanding natural beauty, where the quality of life provides the perfect balance to the hard work and commitment required to succeed in this key post.

Director of Curriculum

Salary £60,000 per annum, 37 hours per week Job Ref: MS 772

You will have current experience of managing a broad range of vocational curriculum in a Further Education College. Highly motivated and a team player, you will provide inspirational leadership to drive and develop our core provision, responding to the needs of our learners and community, and achieving growth targets. Your strong strategic and analytical approach will be accompanied by a values-driven ethos and excellent people management skills. As a Senior Post Holder and influential senior manager, you will demonstrate professional credibility and integrity to the Board of Governors and within the College management structure.

If you would like to discuss details of the post with the College Principal, David Wood, please contact his PA on 01524 521289 to arrange a telephone appointment.

Closing Date: Friday 28th November

It is anticipated that interviews will take place before the end of College term, during week beginning 8th or 15th December 2014

For more information and to apply please visit: www.lmc.ac.uk (various formats available). We prefer to email job packs, however if you require one by post, please phone 01524 521507/email jobs@lmc.ac.uk. All posts are subject to a DBS Disclosure in line with our policy of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners.

Easton&OtleyCollege

Vice Principal, Academic Easton & Otley College Salary circa £84,000

Easton and Otley College is a leading specialist College based in the Eastern region, with two outstanding rural campuses located just outside Norwich, Norfolk and Ipswich, Suffolk.

The College has a strong reputation for its land based, sports and public services provision with OFSTED grading the College "Good" overall at its inspection in November 2013. The College has excellent relationships with local schools with a large 14-16 vocational curriculum. The College's Higher Education provision is delivered in partnership with the University of East Anglia and the University Campus Suffolk and is seen as an important growth area. Easton and Otley College is a vocational specialist and has a close and productive relationship with employers.

Due to pending retirement the governors are looking to appoint a highly motivated Vice Principal, Academic.

Leading on the strategic development of our curriculum to ensure we give the best possible experience to students, staff and the local community.

Working with an enthusiastic staff team and committed governors the successful candidate will have a proven track record of developing staff to deliver the highest standards of performance.

We seek individuals with high levels of land based sector credibility to lead the College towards outstanding in all areas.

Closing date - 11th December 2014

Long List interviews week commencing 5th January 2015

Short List interviews 26th and 27th January 2015

For further details including job descriptions and person specifications visit the College website: www.eastonotley.ac.uk/other-information/jobs/ or call (01603) 731206 to arrange an informal discussion.

The College is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of learners and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT CITY & GUILDS

A global leader in skills development, the City & Guilds Group connects skills and jobs so people and organisations can progress. Made up of City & Guilds, ILM and City & Guilds Kineo, we work with education providers, businesses and governments in over 80 countries, to provide work-relevant education and training.

For over 100 years we've been helping people into a job, on the job and onto the next job.

We're relentlessly ambitious in our plans to equip the next generation of learners to build the UK economy. We need exceptional people to lead that journey and deliver results.

We're looking for four Portfolio Advisors, across different sectors, who can use their knowledge and experience to develop, maintain and manage relationships with strategic business partners and provide solid technical and practical support to customers, employers and other stakeholders across the sector, as well as internal teams.

All roles can be based anywhere in the UK, though you will be expected to travel extensively

PORTFOLIO ADVISOR (BUSINESS & DIGITAL)

Full time, two year fixed term contract
London: £45,900 - £56,100
National: £38,187 - £49,000

With relevant experience in business administration and/or digital industries you'll focus on newly emerging apprenticeship programmes.

PORTFOLIO ADVISOR (KS4 & KS5 SCHOOLS)

Full time, two year fixed term contract
London: £45,900 - £56,100
National: £38,187 - £49,000

You'll support the development and growth of our product and service offering to schools, academies and UTCs.

PORTFOLIO ADVISOR (ENGINEERING)

Full time, permanent
London: £45,900 - £56,100
National: £38,187 - £49,000

You'll need a high level of technical knowledge to lead on our engineering portfolio, with a specific interest in the 14-19 learner category.

Apply online at recruitment.cityandguilds.com/vacancies.html

JOBS

Principal and Chief Executive

Circa £150,000 + benefits
London

As one of the largest and most diverse colleges in London, Lewisham Southwark’s ambition over the next few years is to become the capital’s leading FE College with a reputation for service excellence and for providing tangible outcomes for learners. With a revitalised curriculum linked to employer needs the College is building positive relationships, importantly with employer groups, the Boroughs of Lewisham, Southwark and Lambeth, as well as with schools and key stakeholder groups across South London. With ambitious plans to create the most modern and technically advanced learning environment for students, Lewisham Southwark is well placed to maximise the opportunities presented by today’s changing educational landscape.

Lewisham Southwark College is looking to appoint a new Principal and Chief Executive who will lead them at this challenging time for both the College and sector. You will work with Governors and lead senior management to develop and deliver a strategy that creates unrivalled opportunities for the learners through the delivery of a vibrant curriculum set against the highest standards of teaching and learning. This role will play a pivotal part in educational and employment outcomes across the region, bringing both a commercial acumen and political objectivity to raise aspirations and support students into higher education or employment, through exceptional outcomes.

You must be able to demonstrate a track record of success in a high profile leadership role, with a clear focus for delivering service excellence within a similarly complex and changing environment. You will need to be a proven and inspirational leader with

the professional credibility and strategic flair to engage and inspire, whilst displaying a commitment and passion to improving the life chances of others.

This is a unique opportunity to make a difference to the communities of South London and to influence the sector at an important time of change.

This appointment is being handled by Wickland Westcott. For more information, please visit our website at www.wickland-westcott.co.uk and view **job reference 6905** on the Current Positions page. For an informal and confidential conversation regarding the opportunity, please call **John Dodd on 01625 508100**. Interested applicants should send a detailed CV and covering letter to **6905@wickland-westcott.co.uk**

Important: Please attach an electronic copy of your CV to the email for processing by our automated application system. Cloud based documents (SkyDrive) are not accepted.

Any further enquiries should be addressed to ww@wickland-westcott.co.uk



Wickland Westcott

www.wickland-westcott.co.uk

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Set in the heart of the historic and beautiful market town of Stratford-upon-Avon, birthplace of William Shakespeare and home of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Stratford-upon-Avon College is an internationally recognised brand with a diverse student body.

Stratford-upon-Avon College is going from strength to strength on its journey to become an outstanding, responsive and thriving institution. We inspire our learners to develop their full potential and are committed to excellence and making a lasting contribution to the growth and success of the vibrant community we serve.

It’s an exciting time for us, which we would like you to be a part of, as we continue on our mission to be an outstanding College, with a clear focus and determination.

We are seeking to recruit passionate individuals to join us on our journey within the following roles:

Lecturer in Business
Lecturer in Photography
Fractional Lecturer (0.8 fte) in Photography
Lecturer in Acting & Theatre
Sessional Lecturer in Acting & Theatre (temporary, part-time)
Lecturer in Media Production
Sessional Lecturer in Media Production (temporary, part-time)
Fractional Lecturer (0.6 fte) in Engineering

Sessional Lecturer in Brick (temporary, part-time)
Sessional Lecturer in Digital Technology (temporary, part-time)
Assessor / Instructor in Motor Vehicle (salary up to £24,607p.a, temporary, part-time)

Associate Assessor – Electro Tech (paid per candidate based on £24,607p.a. temporary, part-time)

Student Support Assistant (£16,814 - £17,290p.a temporary 22 hours per week)

Salaries for academic posts are based on £20,602 - £35,106 per annum, unless otherwise stated

For further information please visit our website www.stratford.ac.uk

JOBS

Looking for a new challenge?



Inspired by the rich heritage of the YMCA and energised by the possibilities that digital learning presents, CYQ's vision is to be a global education brand, providing always-on access to high-quality learning and assessment, and delivering industry-backed credentials that are a passport to a new career anywhere in the world.

We have new and exciting opportunities for talented, passionate and high-performing individuals to help us build and deliver our vision

Head of Products and Services (£45k - £48k) Central London

You'll be a strategic product management expert, able to translate a customer-focused product vision into robust plans and outcomes. You'll provide inspiration, leadership and make a hands-on contribution to all stages of the product lifecycle. Ideally you'll possess a track record in leading the implementation and adoption of product management principles and practices.

Head of Commercial (£45k - £48k + car allowance + commission) Home-based

You'll have a relentless focus on customer solutions and a track record in growing and diversifying income. You'll possess a rigorous understanding of the UK skills sector and ideally have a successful sales background across a broad range of education products, including qualifications, e-Learning and publishing.

Operations Manager (circa £27k) Central London

You'll be an experienced Operations Manager, ideally with a background in the awarding body or education sector. You'll have extensive experience in managing systems, projects and information resources and will be passionate about delivering excellence.

For more information and to download an application form go to http://www.ymca.co.uk/jobs/ if you have any queries please contact greatstaff@ymca.co.uk

Closing date for all positions is: 5th December 2014

Teacher Vocational Maths 0.4 £9,327 - £10,725

Closing date: 30th November 2014
Interview date: 5th December 2014

We are seeking a Maths Tutor to teach Functional Skills, primarily off-site, though some teaching will take place within the College setting. The main duties will be to prepare and deliver teaching and learning activities, and to mark and assess students work. You will liaise with Vocational Teachers across the college to support the embedded model of delivery for Functional Skills to ensure high achievements in all aspects of delivery.

You must have a Higher Qualification in Maths a Teaching Qualification and ideally the L5 Maths.

You will have experience in delivering Functional Skills workshops. Your application should tell us how you think you can contribute based on the above.

Each employee is required to undergo a Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) check and must commit to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

Should you wish to apply for this post, you need to complete the Application Form and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form, which should be submitted either electronically to recruitment@west-cheshire.ac.uk, or by post to Organisational Development & HR, West Cheshire College, off Sutton Way, Ellesmere Port, CH65 7BF by 12noon on 30th November 2014.

If you are successful in the short-listing then you will be notified and called for interview 5th December 2014, however please note that this may be subject to change.

For full application details please visit our website www.west-cheshire.ac.uk.

west-cheshire.ac.uk

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Foundation and Skills English Lecturer

Full-time and/or part-time considered
Teaching either GCSE & Functional Skills, or both.
FTE 1.0 £22,961.24 to £32,594.00 per annum

Do you have the skills and expertise to successfully develop the English skills of young people?

We are a college rapidly improving towards outstanding and are seeking highly experienced English tutors to join our team of staff who deliver English across college.

Experience of working with young people aged 16-18 is essential as well as having the ability to deliver the curriculum creatively. You will have excellent organisational skills and be able to work independently across the college.

Experience of teaching either Functional Skills or GCSE English is essential. Ideally, you will hold a teaching qualification, a relevant degree or equivalent professional qualification, and it is desirable for you to possess a Level 4 subject specialist qualification.

As an experienced teacher, you will be flexible, approachable and preferably be familiar with the current issues and challenges within Further Education. You would be joining a supportive team which has a strong focus on improving standards and achieving success.

BCoT will offer "New Teachers" a loan to cover the cost of study and obtaining teaching qualifications. Provided the qualification is obtained, repayment of the loan is not required"
*** Terms and conditions apply*

BCoT is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all its learners, and expects all staff to share this commitment. The successful applicant will be required to undertake appropriate checks, including an enhanced DBS disclosure as well as providing proof of right to work in the UK.

BCoT is an equal opportunities employer and we welcome enquiries from everyone and value diversity in our workforce.

Applications will be reviewed on an on-going basis and an appointment made as soon as a suitable candidate is identified.

To apply for this post, please click on the link below:-

https://www.hirewire.co.uk/FE/1053284/THW_JobBoard.aspx

If you wish to send a CV with your application, please remember to click 'upload' after attaching it, otherwise your CV will not be sent to us.



the skills network

RECRUITING FUNCTIONAL SKILLS TUTORS IN MATHS AND ENGLISH

The Skills Network, a leading training provider, is currently recruiting full and part-time flexible Functional Skills tutors, to support learners while they work to complete our blended learning Functional Skills/GCSE qualification in English and Maths.

ABOUT THE ROLE

As a Functional Skills tutor you will be responsible for providing face to face support to learners in half-day sessions at a local venue. Tutors will also provide remote/online subject specific support to learners, as well as providing encouragement and feedback with the assistance of Learner Support and Retention Advisors. You will be required to liaise with the Learner Support Advisors in our office, regarding support for learners and any areas of concern. Once appointed you will need to attend an induction/training day at a Mercia venue.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO YOU NEED?

All applicants are expected to hold a relevant qualification in the following areas:

- A teaching qualification PTTLs/CTTLs/DTTLs/Cert Ed/ PGCE or equivalent (or working towards)
- Level 3 in Maths and/or English
- Experience in supporting the delivery of functional skills in FE.

To apply for a role, please visit www.theskillsnetwork.com to download an application form and send your completed form to careers@theskillsnetwork.com

Cambridge
PROGRESSION

CONFUSED ABOUT FUNDING FOR ENGLISH AND MATHS?

There is funding for Cambridge Progression.

Find out more at ocr.org.uk/cambridgeprogression or contact us on 02476 851509

OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

FE Week Sudoku challenge

How to play: Fill in all blank squares making sure that each row, column and 3 by 3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9

9	2		7	8				
		1			9			
	8						1	
8					5			2
1		4				5		8
5			6					4
	7						9	
			3			6		
				4	7		8	3

Difficulty:
EASY

1								5
5		3		4		1		9
		8		7		4		
			7		9			
		1				2		
			6		1			
		5		1		9		
7		2		9		5		3
9								7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Solutions:
Next week

Last Week's solutions

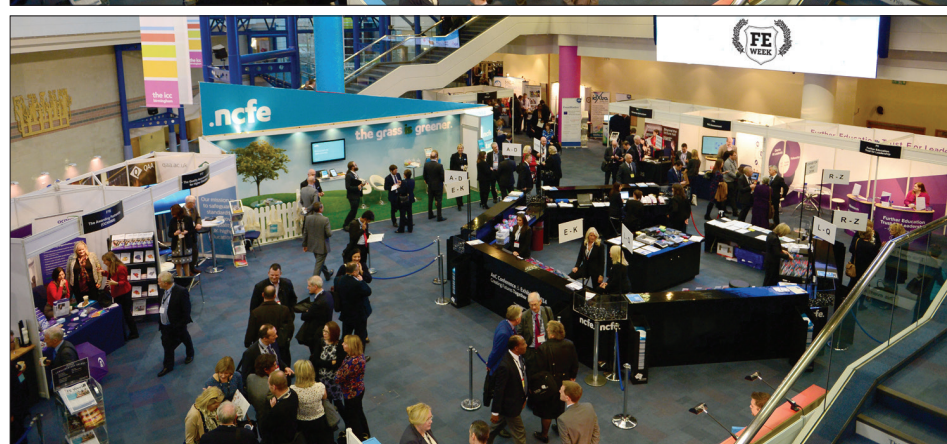
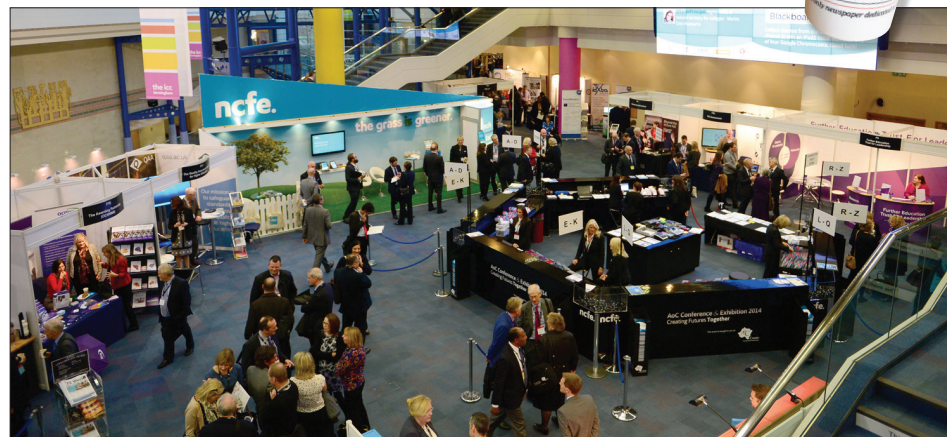
9	8	4	6	3	1	2	5	7
2	1	3	8	5	7	6	4	9
7	6	5	9	4	2	3	8	1
8	5	1	3	6	9	7	2	4
3	2	7	1	8	4	5	9	6
4	9	6	2	7	5	1	3	8
5	4	8	7	2	6	9	1	3
1	7	2	4	9	3	8	6	5
6	3	9	5	1	8	4	7	2

Difficulty:
EASY

7	2	9	1	6	4	3	5	8
3	8	6	2	5	9	4	7	1
4	1	5	7	3	8	6	9	2
9	7	2	5	1	6	8	4	3
5	6	8	4	7	3	1	2	9
1	4	3	9	8	2	7	6	5
2	5	7	3	4	1	9	8	6
6	9	1	8	2	7	5	3	4
8	3	4	6	9	5	2	1	7

Difficulty:
MEDIUM

Spot the difference
to WIN an FE Week mug!



Spot four differences. First correct entry wins an FE Week mug. Text your name and picture of your completed spot the difference to 07969 166 374.

The winner of our last edition's spot the difference was Geogina Douglas, fund-raising apprentice at Fair Train (Group Training Association), in Coventry.

